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John O'Sullivan on the Velvet Revolutions

NATIONAL REVIEW

For the Opposition

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER IS OBAMA'S CRITIC-IN-CHIEF

Jay Nordlinger

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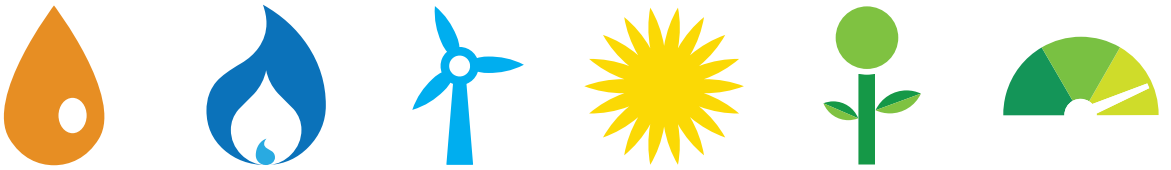

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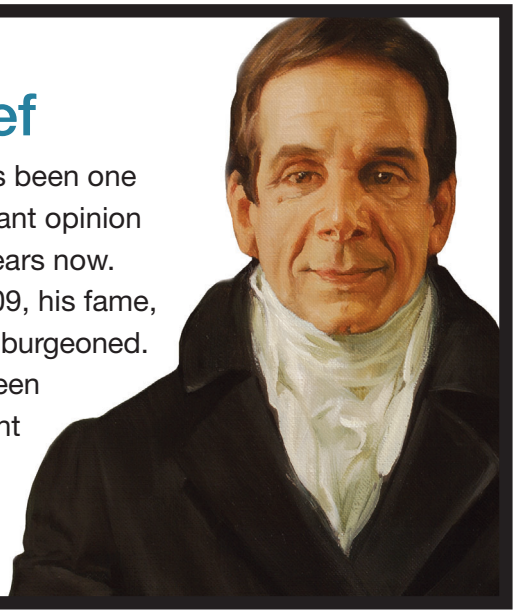
Critic-in-Chief

Charles Krauthammer has been one of America's most important opinion journalists for about 25 years now. But since January 20, 2009, his fame, reach, and popularity has burgeoned. That is because he has been a brilliant critic of President Obama: a persistent, fearless, profound critic of Obama. *Jay Nordlinger*



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Letters

Here Comes the Sun

Lamar Alexander is correct to be concerned about the potential destruction of the environment in "Fisson, Baby, Fission!" (November 2). He is right about the benefits of nuclear power and the problems with wind farms. But he is wrong in his objections to solar.

The most efficient use of solar power does not require large land areas and miles of transmission wires to connect to the grid. Solar-panel systems can be installed on the rooftops of tens of thousands of large low-rise buildings in industrial areas throughout the U.S. Rooftop solar installations can directly supply a large part, if not all, of the power required by the facilities below them (on cloudy days, they would purchase electricity from the grid, as they do now). If the rooftop solar energy generated exceeds a facility's needs, battery storage is not required—excess electricity is sold back to the grid via the existing interconnection point without requiring additional transmission wires.

Rooftops of warehouses and industrial buildings all across America are perfect locations for solar-energy installations. It is a localized and relatively inexpensive micro-approach to clean energy that does not come with the enormous cost and long approval processes required by nuclear-power plants.

A. L. Wolovick
President, BGO Solar LLC
Brooklyn, N.Y.

LAMAR ALEXANDER REPLIES: Mr. Wolovick is exactly right that rooftop solar panels take up no extra space and can be installed on many buildings across the country; it's an idea I support and hope we'll see implemented more widely. However, we have to get the cost of solar panels down. Solar energy can cost four to five times as much as other forms of electricity. He's also right when he says that these rooftop solar panels would need to maintain connections to the grid—which would require coal or nuclear plants to be kept running on the other end—to make them work when the sun doesn't shine.

But the current proposals coming from the Obama administration would cover 1,000 square miles of our land with large solar facilities, which—as I suggest in the article to which Mr. Wolovick responds—should be cause for concern among all who, like myself, are worried about conserving America's landscapes.

We Were Just Tweeting About That

Organizations that promote articulate dialogue, such as NATIONAL REVIEW, should take more seriously the accelerated decline of attention spans and conscious thought produced by the (mis)information age, as described by Mark Helprin ("In Defense of the Book," September 21). The frantic, noisy distractions and capricious dominance rituals of our high-tech toys are transforming our species in a fundamental way, from brooding, contemplative great apes into clicking, chittering insects.

Ralph deLaubenfels
Via snail mail

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How can we squeeze more food from a RAINDROP?

Farming feeds the world, but it depends on vital natural resources. Just consider this: irrigation for agriculture consumes 2/3 of the world's fresh water withdrawals.

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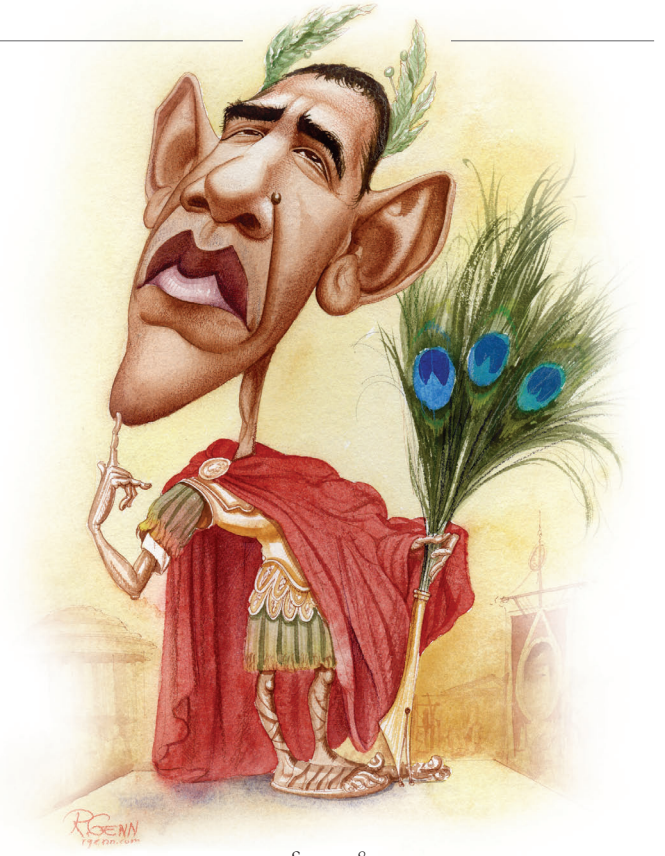
The Week

■ Bad election news for Republicans: Now they have to govern New Jersey.

■ Presidents have been complaining about the press since George Washington. Smart presidents, also since Washington, do their complaining behind closed doors. The disproportion of stature, ironically, makes the press seem stronger: When presidents behave like Goliath, critics turn into Davids. Someone tell the Obama administration. All fall it has been on a tear against Fox News. The White House website teases a "Truth-o-Meter" to rebut "Fox lies." "Let's not pretend they're a news network," said White House communications director Anita Dunn. "Not really a news station," David Axelrod agreed. In October, the Treasury Department tried to exclude Fox from a pool interview with executive-pay czar Ken Feinberg. To their credit, other news organizations refused to participate unless Fox was included. President Obama has trouble conceding the legitimacy of his opponents—perhaps because he has encountered so few of them in his charmed public life.

■ When she went on the warpath against Fox, Dunn became famous. Before long, a video was making its way around the Internet. It showed Dunn speaking at a forum in the Dominican Republic last January. (No word on whether she stayed at Charlie Rangel's pad.) Talking about the Obama presidential campaign, she said, "Very rarely did we communicate through the press anything that we didn't absolutely control." Getting more specific, she said, "One of the reasons we did so many of the David Plouffe videos was, not just for our supporters, but also because it was a way for us to get our message out without having to actually talk to reporters." (Plouffe was the campaign manager.) "We just put that out there and made them write what Plouffe had said as opposed to Plouffe doing an interview with a reporter. So it was very much we controlled it as opposed to the press controlled it." Would it have made that much of a difference?

■ The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of the end of the short and horrible 20th century (1914–1989), characterized by bloodshed and totalitarianism. On November 9 Germany celebrates the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall with a grand fete. Lech Walesa and Mikhail Gorbachev will be there. So will the leaders of three of the World War II allies that occupied divided Berlin—Britain's Gordon Brown, France's Nicolas Sarkozy, Russia's Dmitry Medvedev. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will also be there—subbing for Barack Obama. We know that presidents are busy men; they can't be everywhere they ought to be (Obama will be in Asia). But would he have made the time if the wall fit some historical narrative that he cared more about? It's unlikely that he deplores America's fight for freedom or the downfall of Communism. More probably these events don't register with him. Our young post-racial president seems to be post-historical too.



ROMAN GENN

See page 8.

■ Economic growth for the third quarter of the year clocked in at 3.5 percent. Some federal programs, notably Cash for Clunkers, boosted that figure, in effect redistributing income from the fourth quarter to the third. The administration gives its stimulus bill the credit, claiming that it "created or saved" 640,329 jobs. Ed Lazear, chairman of the Bush administration's Council of Economic Advisers, notes that his report in January predicted that a recovery would happen right around now, even without the stimulus. The truth is that it is impossible to determine how many jobs would have been lost without the stimulus; but if we divide the number of dollars spent by the number of jobs the White House claims were saved or created, the result is a cost of $160,000 for each job. The White House dismisses this as "calculator abuse." At press time, Rahm Emanuel and Anita Dunn have not launched a campaign to delegitimize calculators. Wait for Q4.

■ It is almost impossible to hand out truckloads of cash without some of it falling into the hands of swindlers, but Congress's stimulus dollars seem to have been particularly susceptible to graft. This year, lawmakers expanded a program that gave first-time homebuyers a tax credit worth 10 percent of the purchase price, up to $8,000. (People who owed less in taxes than the credit was worth got checks for the difference.) The problem? As Kevin Hassett detailed in a Bloomberg.com commentary, there is no reliable way to tell whether someone is buying a home for the first time; and worse, the law did not

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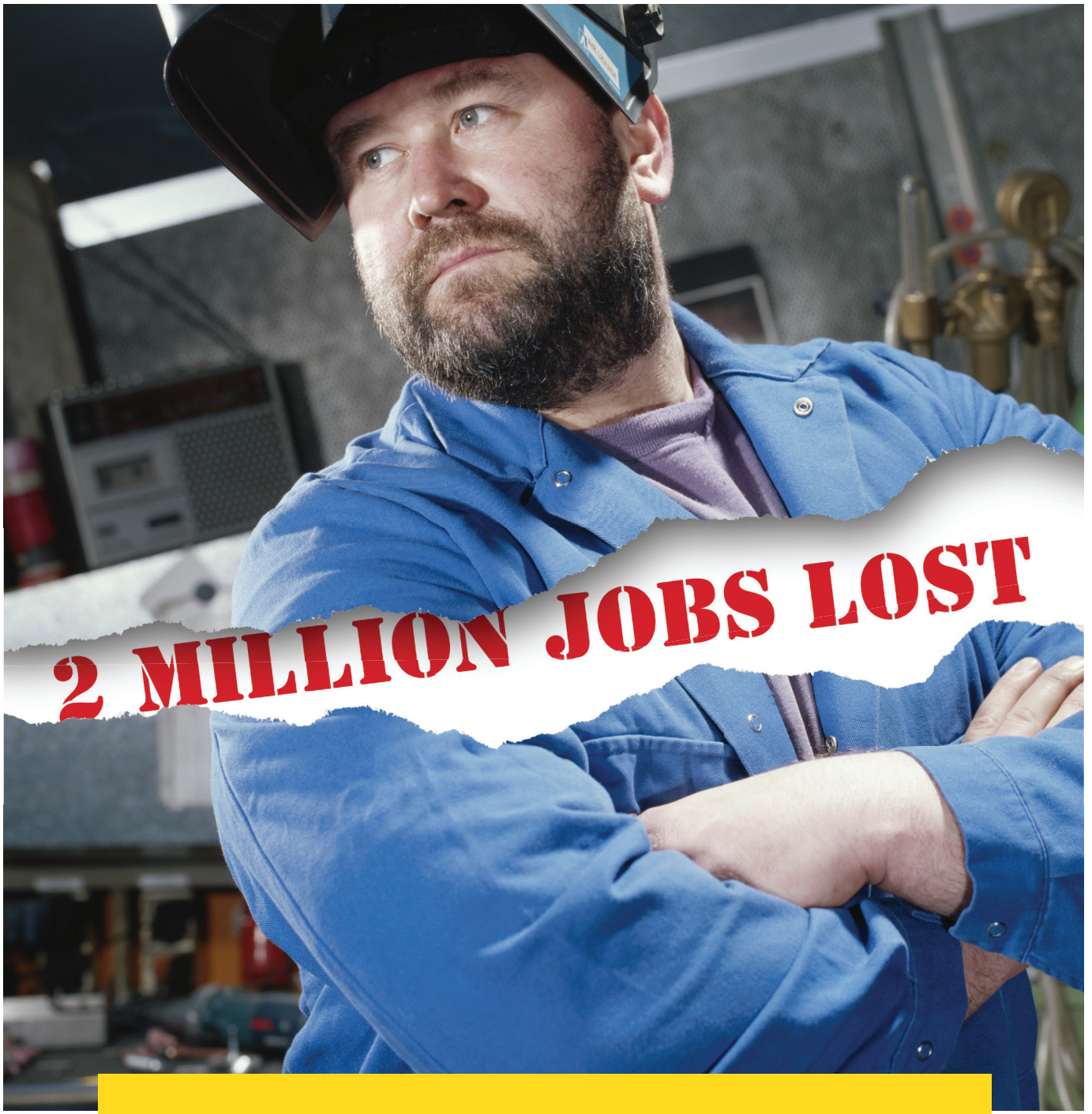

Another **unfortunate truth** about Congress's climate bill

As the U.S. Senate considers the Kerry-Boxer climate legislation, Americans aren't getting the whole truth. A recent study* found the House-passed climate bill could cost two million American jobs – and the new Kerry-Boxer bill could have even greater economic impacts.

America is in the middle of a harsh recession. Think about the impact of two million jobs lost. Yet another unfortunate truth about Congress's climate bill.

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*Source: *Impact on the Economy of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (H.R. 2454)*, CRA International, August 2009

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give the IRS the authority to demand documentation that a home had been purchased at all. Anyone could simply assert that the government owed him $8,000. When the Treasury Department investigated, it found 19,300 claims based on homes that had not yet been purchased, 74,000 claims by taxpayers who probably were not first-time buyers, and more than 580 claims by taxpayers who were younger than 18 (some as young as four). They amounted to about $504 million in stolen taxpayer money. We can only hope the fraudsters spent it in a stimulative manner.

■ Kenneth Feinberg, President Obama's pay czar, hath spoken: Thou shalt not collect cash bonuses, thou shalt accept the halving of thy pay, thou shalt do penance. The pay restrictions directed at the highest-paid employees of the seven firms that took the most taxpayer money are the product of both politics and emotion (the desire to punish), not of sound thinking. The typical Wall Street bank CEO had ten years' worth of his annual compensation tied up in company stock, he didn't dump his shares, and most of the mortgage-backed assets he got burned on were rated Triple-A: which is to say, the popular version of the financial crisis—it was caused by greed-crazed CEOs who loaded up on risky junk and then cashed out—is folk economics. President Obama promised to base his policies on science rather than superstition, but when the science is economics and the superstition is popular, he's a Flat Earther, a pre-Copernican. He may as well be throwing stones at the moon.

■ When the cost of living rises, Social Security checks rise too, which seems reasonable. In the rare case when the cost of living falls, as over the last year, Social Security checks stay flat—which means that those checks buy more. But a bipartisan clamor has arisen to protest that it is unfair to deprive seniors of a cost-of-living adjustment just because there is nothing to adjust. President Obama has responded by proposing to send every senior a $250 check. Thus are they to be saved from the calamity of only slightly increased benefits.

■ The Obama administration hoped to have 40 million doses of swine-flu vaccine available by the end of October, but came up 12 million doses short. This is not a problem only for them, but a seemingly intractable defect of early government responses to feared epidemics. Vaccine production is a somewhat antiquated oligopoly; at the same time, scientists and the public are right to be cautious when it comes to new cures. Meanwhile the media, to tell the story, oversell it, recycling all the photos of pigs with thermometers in their mouths that they ran during the last swine-flu epidemic, in the Ford administration. There: *That* is the first time the 38th and 44th presidents have been compared.

■ President Obama signed a bill that expanded federal hate-crimes laws and added crimes motivated by bias against homosexuals to the list. The bill will also allow the Justice Department to provide assistance to police investigating these crimes. There can be two justifications for such measures. Either hate crimes are more heinous than other crimes, or we think that those who commit them are more responsive than other criminals to additional penalties and law-enforcement resources. We have yet to hear a persuasive argument for the first claim, or any argument at all for the second. Which makes us think the real purpose of these laws is to score a cultural point that should have nothing to do with the criminal law.

■ Eric Holder's Justice Department strikes again. In Kinston, N.C., two-thirds of the 15,000 registered voters are black. Discriminatory barriers to voting are a distant memory: Black registration is higher than the black voting-age population, black public officials are routinely elected, and Barack Obama won the district by a wide margin. In 2008, Kinston also approved—two-to-one—a referendum to make city-council elections nonpartisan by omitting candidates' party affiliation from ballots. For a small town where citizens often know their representatives personally, that makes sense. But thanks to the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA), voting-rules changes in Kinston and numerous other districts must still be approved by the Justice Department. The partisans in Holder's Civil Rights Division rejected the people's will on the astounding theory that voters had a right to be represented by Democrats and, without the party label, could not be trusted to make their own decisions about which candidates to support. The point of the VRA was to protect voters in a time of systematic discrimination. Under Holder, the point is to protect the Democratic party.

President Obama promised to base his policies on science rather than superstition, but when the science is economics and the superstition is popular, he's a Flat Earther, a pre-Copernican.

■ The Justice Department has announced that it intends to take a light hand when it comes to investigating medical-marijuana transactions in states such as California, where they are legal. True to Obama-administration practice, the new guidelines are vague and contingent, and the DOJ retains the prerogative of conducting arbitrary and selective prosecutions. But Washington has been nudged, just a little bit, toward sanity when it comes to marijuana prohibition.

■ Democrats talk a good game about the middle class, but their party doesn't much represent it: A recent *USA Today* analysis finds that Democratic members of the House represent the majority of the wealthy and the majority of the poor. This isn't much of a surprise, inasmuch as the Democrats have long been the party of the very rich—Kennedy-style trust-funders, Wall Street traders, Barbra Streisand—as well as the party of the housing projects, social pathology, and welfare checks set. What is really notable in the findings is that Democrats are making downward progress from the very wealthy to the merely affluent, now representing a majority of those whose families are not superrich but make more than $200,000 a year. Of course, $200,000 a year goes a lot farther in

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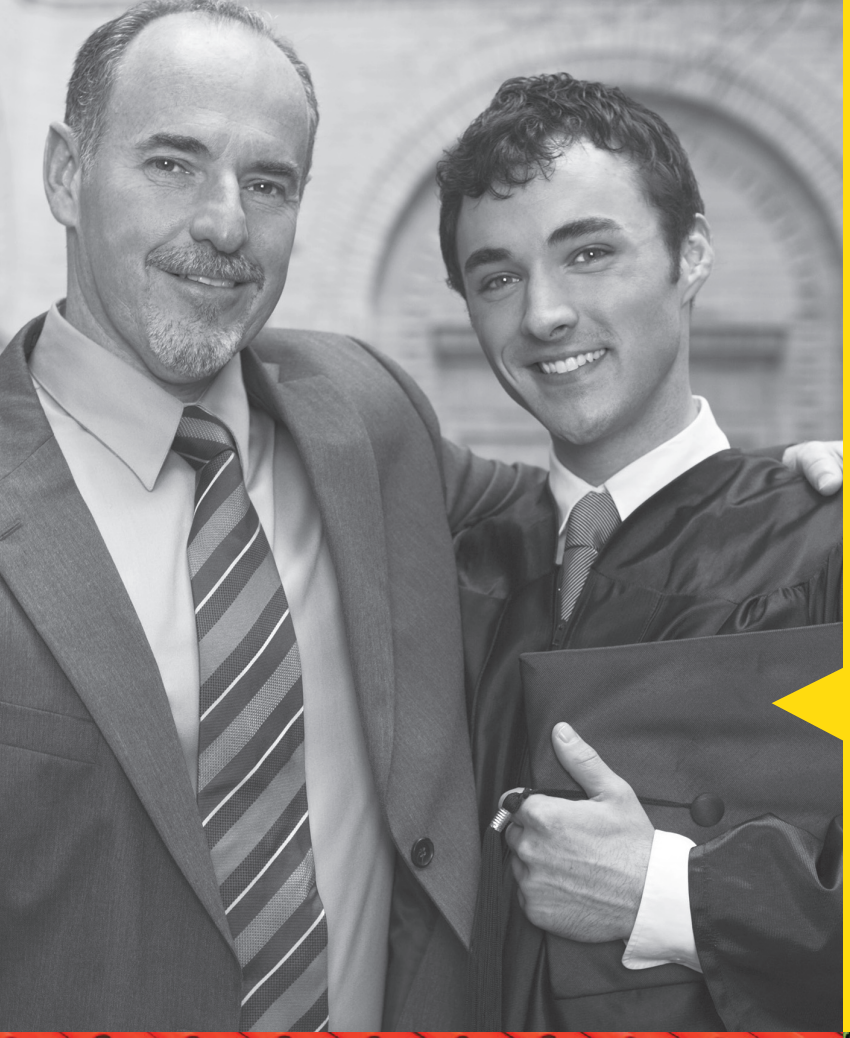

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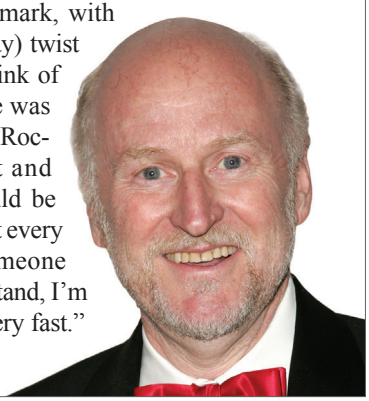
traditionally conservative states such as Texas and Arizona than it does in such Democratic strongholds as New Jersey and New York City, a fact that may come to be rued by those relatively affluent Americans who voted themselves a tax hike when they voted for Barack Obama. Kansas is fine—what's the matter with Greenwich?

■ For some time now, Human Rights Watch has been zealously anti-Israel. One person who has noticed this is Robert L. Bernstein, who founded HRW, served as its chairman for 20 years, and is now founding chairman emeritus. He took to the op-ed page of the *New York Times* to rebuke his child, saying, "Human Rights Watch had as its original mission to pry open closed societies, advocate basic freedoms and support dissenters. But recently it has been issuing reports on the Israeli-Arab conflict that are helping those who wish to turn Israel into a pariah state." He went on to say that there is a difference between open societies and closed societies: The former have the means of addressing any abuses, while the latter do not. And yet HRW "has written far more condemnations of Israel for violations of international law than of any other country in the region"—a region of closed, rights-abusing societies. The founding of HRW was a noble act, and this op-ed rebuke, painful as it might have been to its author, was too.

■ Rocco Landesman, head of the National Endowment for the Arts, says Obama will be good for creative types because he is "the first president that actually writes his own books since Teddy Roosevelt and arguably the first to write them really well since Lincoln." That sentence is vulnerable on numerous factual grounds (Landesman admitted afterwards that it was "probably just wrong"), not to mention grammatical ones, but even the central premise is shaky: Writers are not uniformly generous toward other writers' work. Landesman continued his presidential tongue bath by saying that if "the United States is the most powerful country in the world, then Barack Obama is the most powerful writer since Julius Caesar." Disagree with that? The joke's on you, explains Landesman: "I made a deliberately outlandish remark, with the delicious (for me, anyway) twist that the last thing people think of with Julius Caesar is that he was a writer. [Speak for yourself, Rocco.] I enjoyed the conceit and never imagined that it would be taken literally. If I have to edit every remark I make because someone somewhere might misunderstand, I'm going to become very dull very fast." He may be there already.



■ Referendum 71 was a referendum on the ballot of Washington State, put there by marriage supporters who wanted to overturn the state's latest domestic-partnership law, for being too close to gay marriage. A month before the vote, the state planned to release the names of those who signed petitions for Referendum 71, on the grounds that they had taken part "in the legislative process," like lobbyists. The Supreme Court blocked the state. The reality is that gay-rights activists wanted the names to subject petition signers to harassment. It happened in California, after last year's fight over Proposition 8; several who gave money to that cause lost jobs. Making contributions is a form of organized political speech that ought to be transparent; signing a petition is a private act, like voting. Expressing your civic opinion should not leave you open to what George Will calls "thuggish liberalism."

■ Ken Cuccinelli, the successful Republican candidate for attorney general of Virginia, told an interviewer, "My view is that homosexual acts—not homosexuality, but homosexual acts—are wrong." He added that "it's appropriate to have policies that reflect that." He further said that he did not consider homosexual acts "healthy" for either individuals or society. The *Washington Post* editorially condemned him for "bigotry" and "ugly nonsense"; it predicted that if elected he would be "an embarrassment to the commonwealth." Reasonable people can certainly disagree with the candidate. But half the country shares his moral views about homosexuality (Gallup found a 48–48 split last year on whether "homosexual relations" are "morally acceptable or morally wrong"). If the *Post* wants to argue that this half of the country—including most Christians—is too bigoted to serve in office, it should make an argument to that effect instead of relying on scare words. But in that case, it might not be so easy to tell just which party is being illiberal here.

■ When Atlanta elected its first black mayor, in 1973, it was a huge step forward for the entire South. In years since, the city has always chosen a black mayor, but this fall a white woman, Mary Norwood, was the frontrunner in pre-election polls. Her popularity across racial lines alarmed a pair of political-science professors, who circulated a memo urging their fellow black Atlantans (57 percent of the population) to unite behind a single black candidate and keep the white woman out of office. Despite this attempt to stoke the fires of racial animosity, Atlanta lived up to its reputation as a post-racial city by giving Norwood the largest number of votes, though she will face a runoff. The election represents yet another advance: Having secured the right to vote regardless of race, many Atlantans are choosing their candidates regardless of race as well.

■ MSNBC snarler Keith Olbermann, who specializes in hysterical vituperation, referred to "the total, mindless, morally bankrupt, knee-jerk, fascistic hatred without which Michelle Malkin would just be a big mashed-up bag of meat with lipstick on it." Charming . . . but somewhat vexing to feminists. They agree with Olbermann's opinion of Malkin, of course, but he's a guy and she's a gal, and is there not some tiny flicker of sexist contempt to be glimpsed behind his words? The offense was compounded by Olbermann's having read out an e-mail communication from Malkin in a ditzy valley-girl voice. Feminists labored mightily to square the circle, with much agonized groaning about how "gendered language is so deeply ingrained in our discourse." Meanwhile, the doughty Michelle did not miss the opportunity to hoist the feminist Left with its own petard: "The 'M' in 'MSNBC' stands for 'misogyny,'" she chortled on her blog. It sure doesn't stand for "manners."

■ "Police, so what? Police die too! Feds die too! Do not carry a pistol if you're going to give it up to police. You give them a

PETER KRAMER/GETTY

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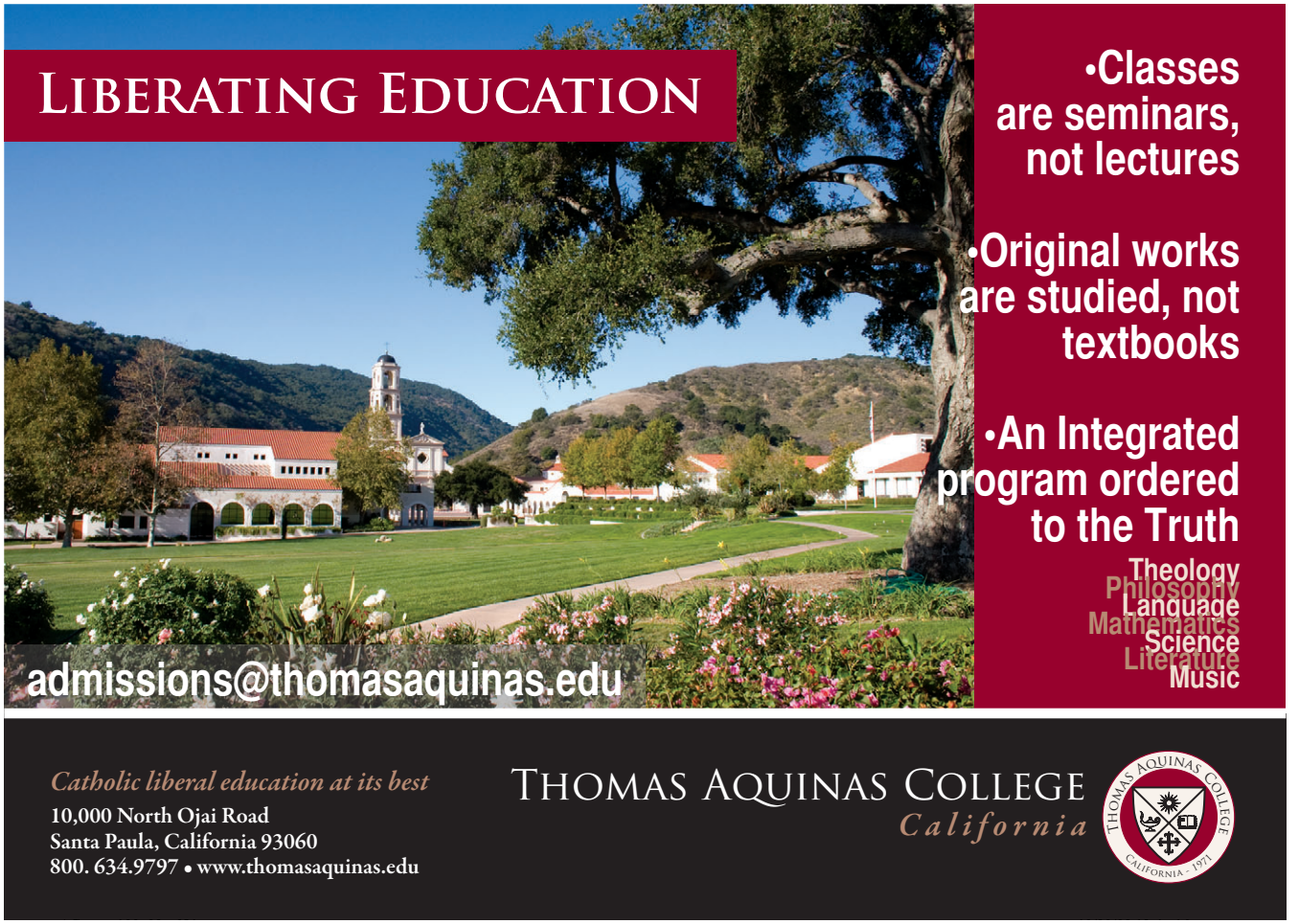
bullet." That was the lesson Luqman Ameen Abdullah, a radical imam in Detroit, once shouted at his followers. When FBI agents attempted to arrest Abdullah (a Muslim convert formerly known as Christopher Thomas) and ten followers on firearms and other charges, Abdullah allegedly practiced what he had preached. He was killed in the resulting shootout. The feds say Abdullah led a violent Islamist group, called "the ummah," which sought to establish a sovereign Muslim enclave in the United States. It would be governed under Islam's sharia law by Jamil al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown), who is serving a life sentence for the 2000 murder of a Georgia police officer. Abdullah advocated spreading Islam, and imposing sharia, through violent jihad, viewing himself and his flock as fighting a war against the United States and non-Muslims. On cue, the usual suspects groused that the real problem is the government's use of informants to infiltrate suspect mosques. We suspect we could use more of them.

■ The great Afghan election drama ended in a fizzle. After the administration strong-armed Hamid Karzai into accepting a runoff, his rival, Abdullah Abdullah, dropped out, and Karzai was declared the winner. This was all much ado, for two reasons: 1) Abdullah was in all likelihood going to lose a runoff anyway; 2) ordinary Afghans surely care more about the government's performance on the most basic matters—security, corruption, rule of law—than the niceties of electoral process. The post-election crisis held two main risks, both of which seem to have been averted for now. A schism in the country's elite could have erupted into civil war, which hasn't happened (Abdullah's supporters didn't even take to the streets in protest). Or the power struggle could have been internalized in the regime, making it even more dysfunctional, if we had forced a shotgun marriage between Karzai and Abdullah. The question now is how to increase the government's legitimacy by improving its performance. That will be predicated—as so much else in the region—on giving General McChrystal the troops he needs to implement an effective counterinsurgency campaign. Prime Minister Maliki in Iraq seemed hopelessly weak and ineffective as well, so long as we didn't have enough troops in the country to impose basic order. As security improved, so did Maliki. The same could happen in Afghanistan—if President Obama heeds the advice of his commanding general.

■ The premise of Obama's Iran policy has effectively been that the mullahs are reasonable and reasonably trustworthy, and that it takes little but carrot-heavy diplomacy to influence them. It was therefore an embarrassment to the president when the world learned that the Iranian regime was operating an undisclosed uranium-enrichment facility. That is why his administration strove so mightily to present subsequent negotiations with Tehran—which seemed to yield a commitment on its part to ship 70 percent of its uranium to Russia and France for enrichment to levels suitable for a nuclear reactor—as an unmitigated triumph. In reality it was far from that: The



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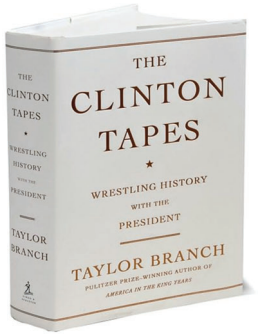
uranium, once shipped back to Iran, could be further enriched to weaponizable levels, its foreign custodians having already gotten it partway there; and there was still every reason to believe that Iran's lying rulers were operating a covert weapons program in addition to whatever "civilian" activities they deigned to disclose. Now matters have gotten even worse, with the regime balking at almost every aspect of the agreement: Sorry, not 70 percent; and we don't feel like sending it all at once; and actually we'd rather it were enriched on our own soil, but maybe you can come visit if you stand behind this yellow line. Just as the mullahs intend, the twists and turns of this pathetic saga obscure what they are really up to: stalling for time with procedural games while moving full speed ahead with their illicit nuclear activities. And the leader of the free world acquiesces. The audacity of naïveté is a dangerous thing.

■ When democratic protests broke out in Iran last summer, the Obama administration gave the impression of considering such protests a nuisance—a hindrance to the real work of dealing with the regime in place. The administration has now cut off funding to several groups working to help the Iranian democrats. One of them is the Connecticut-based Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, which does much to let the world know what is going on inside that dark country. The center will have to shut down unless private funds come in. The administration is right to deal with the world as it is. But the Iranian democracy movement, and the weakness of the regime of the mullahs, are realities too.

■ What just happened in Honduras? Some initial headlines suggested that Manuel Zelaya had been reinstated to the presidency. Not quite. As part of the deal that was announced on October 30, Honduran officials agreed to create a temporary unity government and let the Honduran congress decide whether to restore Zelaya as president for the remainder of his term, which was originally scheduled to end in January. The Honduran supreme court will tell lawmakers whether Zelaya's reinstatement would (in its opinion) be legal. Considering that Honduran congressmen are preoccupied with the November 29 national elections, and that the court ordered Zelaya's arrest in the first place, we doubt that "Mel" will be returned to the presidential palace. Either way, the agreement represents a victory for Honduras's democratic institutions. In a reversal of its earlier position, the Obama administration pledged to lift sanctions and recognize the upcoming Honduran elections even if Zelaya is not restored. After months of unfairly being treated like a pariah, Honduras will now be allowed to decide its political future democratically.

■ There is a newish group called J Street, which is a left-liberal American Jewish organization, meant to counter the traditional Jewish organizations, which it considers too hawkish. J Street's slogan is "Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace," which may raise the question, "Who among Israel's supporters is not pro-peace?" At any rate, J Street's university arm has dropped the "Pro-Israel" part, because it is too much of a turnoff to its core constituency. J Street is against sanctions on Iran, okay with the Goldstone Report, and so on. Its spokesmen lean toward moral equivalence, whereby, for example, both Tehran and Jerusalem must "cool the rhetoric." (Though J Street seems far more interested in criticizing pro-Israel hawks than in criticizing, say, Hamas.) The organization just held its first conference, which ran into trouble when it was reported that at least one of its invited guests had analogized Israel to Nazi Germany. Congressmen who were to attend the conference dropped like flies, many saying they had been unaware of the group's nature; the Israeli ambassador declined to attend, citing Israel's interests. The White House is quite high on J Street, however, and sent the national security adviser, James Jones. He told the gathering, "You can be sure that this administration will be represented at all future J Street conferences." Which is a believable promise. J Street is the Obama administration's kind of American Jewish organization, although it is not the sort of organization whose policies are likely to lead to something deserving the name of peace.

■ In 1992, Bill Clinton campaigned mercilessly against Bush 41 as a friend of China's Communist government and therefore not a friend to Chinese people, certainly Chinese democrats. In the newly published *Clinton Tapes*, Taylor Branch tells about a 1993 meeting between President Clinton and Jiang Zemin, the Chinese No. 1. Jiang insisted on reading a speech to Clinton, says Branch, "about the glorious history of China and the folly of attempts to influence her internal affairs." This went on for so long that Clinton eventually felt obliged to cut him off. "Speaking in direct sentences, with all the charm he could muster, he invited the Chinese leader to get down to business. He told Jiang he didn't want to change China's political institutions. Nor did he object to prisons. In fact, America had lots of people in prison, and Clinton wanted to put away even more." Of course, there is a difference between Chinese prisons and American prisons. To find out that difference, you could consult any former political prisoner from China.



■ Pope Benedict created an express lane for disaffected Anglican congregations to join the Catholic Church, with their married priests. To analyze the move solely in terms of market share—as if the pope were seeking to boost his—is a mistake. Catholics believe that Christian disunity is a scandal, and that their church has a special obligation to work to end it. The pope has therefore taken a bold step toward the goal that all Christians be in full communion. If this move decimates the Anglican church, it will be one more piece of evidence that the progressive dilution of Christianity cannot be its path forward through modernity.

■ Some 2.3 million immigrants have settled in Britain so far this decade. Official government statements have justified this generous immigration policy with economic arguments, citing labor shortages. A former senior adviser to the government has now, however, revealed that the true motivation was political: "to rub the Right's nose in diversity and render their arguments out of date." Writing in the *London Evening Standard*, Andrew Neather alleges that government ministers, "passionately in favor of a more diverse society," proceeded by stealth for fear of alienating their working-class voting base. This is disgraceful if true: the demographic transformation of an entire nation under false pretenses, by elite ideologues who hold the common people in contempt. Thank goodness no such thing could happen in the United States!

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■ In recent elections for the European parliament in Brussels, the British National party got about 900,000 votes, entitling it under the system of proportional representation to two seats. One of those seats goes to Nick Griffin, the BNP leader. The BBC felt obliged to invite him on to *Question Time*, its flagship program for debating social and political issues. A racist, an anti-Semite, and a liar about the unsavory things he has said and done on his way to the top of the BNP, Griffin is nevertheless no Hitler. A poor speaker, he has only one point to make, that immigration is out of control and many British people feel that they have lost their country. The other panelists and the audience behaved as though out for a lynching. Opinion polls afterward showed that this rudeness created a backlash, and as many as 22 percent said they would now consider voting BNP. Post-WWII governments one and all have pretended that immigration either is not happening or does not matter, and this has generated rival extremisms that sustain each other. The BNP and Griffin will have a baleful impact until the political incompetence and dissembling of the mainstream parties stops.

■ In the English city of Norwich, 67-year-old grandmother Pauline Howe joined a peaceful protest by Christians against the city's gay-pride parade. Some of the paraders took time out to insult Mrs. Howe in person, with remarks of an offensively salacious nature. The lady wrote a letter of complaint to the city council. For her trouble, she was visited by two uniformed police officers, who interrogated her in her home to determine whether she had perpetrated a "hate incident." After scrutinizing Mrs. Howe's responses, the officers of the law graciously allowed that her hate did not rise to the level where she might be a danger to society, so there will be no prosecution. Sighed Mrs. Howe: "Our freedoms as Bible-believing Christians have been squashed." Indeed. To avoid the attention of the authorities in today's Britain, it is wiser to be a Koran-believing Muslim.

■ At the end of August, the Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset Ali Megrahi was sent home to Libya, officially on grounds of compassion. In July, he had been said to have terminal cancer and a life expectancy of three months at most. Moammar Qaddafi and

The Poor Need Capitalism

THE Left's version of recent economic history boils down to one terrible fact: The distribution of income has gradually become more unequal. Within the United States, that fact is incontrovertible. It is not clear, however, that increased inequality has been bad.

Inequality is, after all, the foundation of a capitalist society. When individuals work hard, or innovate, they receive outsized rewards. When others see those rewards, they are motivated to work hard and innovate. As the lottery-ticket market has demonstrated, the bigger the prize, the bigger the motivation.

But a society that focused all rewards on the very wealthy would be unacceptable. Individuals born in poverty would be condemned to stay there. The inequality that accompanies a vibrant capitalist society is attractive because it enables growth that benefits all. If capitalism is working well, then as growth advances, the welfare of even the poorest members of society improves. A capitalist can accept the fact that the fellow at the top has a lot more money than the fellow in the middle, because the system that allows that to happen helps the fellow at the bottom.

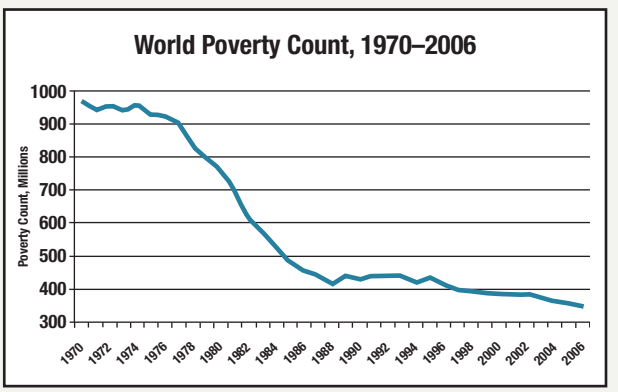
The nearby chart draws on a landmark new study by economists Maxim Pinkovskiy and Xavier Sala-i-Martin. The authors set out to study changes in the world distribution of income by gathering data from many different countries. As a byproduct of their work, they are able to count the number of individuals who live on $1 per day or less, a key measure of poverty.

According to their calculations, the number of people living in poverty so defined has plummeted, from 967,574,000 in 1970 to 350,436,000 in 2006, a decrease of a whopping 64 percent. Whence the reduction? The biggest factor is the emergence of middle classes in previously poverty-stricken China and India. And the spread of capitalism to other countries has similarly been followed by prosperity. The trend is even more impressive if one considers that the world population skyrocketed over that time, increasing by 3 billion.

If the trend continues for just 40 more years, poverty will have been essentially eradicated from the globe. And capitalism will have done it. Socialism offers itself as an alternative to capitalism that is more just to the poor. To test that view, the authors reconstruct the distribution of income for the countries of the former Soviet Union. Back in the Communist days, poverty was much, much higher in the Soviet Union than it is today.

There are those who have argued that the current financial crisis has served as proof that capitalism is a failed ideology. The work of Pinkovskiy and Sala-i-Martin suggests that there are about a billion people whose lives prove otherwise.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



SOURCE: PINKOVSKIY AND SALA-I-MARTIN, PARAMETRIC ESTIMATIONS OF THE WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME, 2005. NBER WORKING PAPER 15433

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his son and heir staged a dramatic welcome. Photographs then showed Megrahi undergoing serious treatment in hospital. There was something fishy about it, especially because British companies immediately sealed lucrative oil and gas deals with Libya. The three months are now up, and Megrahi is back in his house in Tripoli. His telephone calls are monitored, and he keeps up five- and ten-minute conversations in a normal voice. The British doctor responsible for the forecast of three months tries to save his reputation by saying that Megrahi must be on morphine in the last stages. Or perhaps it is a medical miracle.

■ When the U.N. Human Rights Council takes a break from criticizing Israel, it turns to its next-highest priority: ensuring that counterterrorism measures do not interfere with the full self-realization of anyone's socially constructed sexual identity. In a draft report, a special rapporteur frets that "enhanced immigration controls that focus attention on male bombers who may be dressing as females to avoid scrutiny make transgender persons susceptible to increased harassment and suspicion." A case in point: Yousef Mohammed al-Shihri, an al-Qaeda veteran who was released from Guantanamo in 2007. Last month Saudi border guards stopped him as he tried to enter the country from Yemen dressed as a woman. In a case of insensitivity to non-traditional gender norms, things escalated to the point where al-Shihri opened fire, and the Saudi police shot him. A search of his car revealed automatic weapons, hand grenades, and explosive belts. And to think that this misunderstanding could so easily have been avoided—if only the Saudis had understood that terrorists sometimes just like to feel pretty.

■ In Scotland, it's a crime to have fat children. A year and a half ago, authorities ordered a hefty Dundee couple to send three of their children to dancing and soccer lessons to slim them down. When the mambo cure didn't work, friendly social workers pulled two of the "endangered" kids from their home and sent them to foster care; this fall they took away the other five, including a girl who had been born just hours earlier (she was later returned). Speaking of excess pounds, the local government has spent more than £100,000 to save these children from weighing more than its health experts deem appropriate. A bloated state hungry for problems to solve is a much greater threat to its citizens than a few chubby children.

■ Rush Limbaugh lost his bid to be part-owner of the St. Louis Rams. The National Football League may properly choose to distance itself from political figures (though why does Keith Olbermann appear on *Sunday Night Football*?). But the NFL should make its decision uninfluenced by lies. During the Rush/Rams flap, CNN's Rick Sanchez and Bryan Burwell of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* recycled a Limbaugh quotation about slavery ("Slavery built the South. I'm not saying we should bring it back; I'm just saying it had its merits"). Months earlier, MSNBC's Rachel Maddow quoted Limbaugh's saying that James Earl Ray should have gotten the Medal of Honor. The problem: Both quotations were bogus, fabricated by one Jack Huberman and circulated on Wikiquote. Bearing false witness would be a problem if the false were embarrassed by it: Burwell and Maddow offered notably evasive and graceless retractions. Roll on, Rush; lies have long legs, truth's are longer.

■ The management of an apartment building in Albany, Ore., forbade the flying of flags or display of flag decals anywhere on the premises. A tenant whose son was serving in Iraq was told he couldn't fly an American flag from the back of his motorcycle. A different tenant, inquiring the reason for the ban, was told: "Someone might be offended." Whereas, of course, nobody could be offended by an insult to Old Glory. After much negative commentary and some protests, the building's management rescinded the ban.

■ If you think you can't use the word "black," and must use "African-American" instead, you may find that you can't talk straight. At the 2002 Winter Olympics, an American woman won a gold medal in the bobsled. She was the first black woman ever to win a gold medal in the Winter Games. But NBC, the network covering the Games, had no way of conveying this fact to its viewers. An announcer was reduced to saying, "She's the first African-American woman *from any country* to win the gold medal." In the American media, Nelson Mandela has been called "the first African-American president of South Africa." Students have written that Othello was "African-American." And so on. The latest comes from *The New Republic*, whose review of a biography of Booker T. Washington began this way: "Once the most famous and influential African American in the United States (and probably the world), Booker T. Washington . . ." Surely the writer meant that Washington was probably the most famous and influential black man in the world. And there is nothing wrong with saying so, for, as we used to say in a bygone era, "black is beautiful."

■ Penguin Classics has come out with a "deluxe edition" of Huey Newton's memoir, *Revolutionary Suicide*. (Yes, classics aren't what they used to be.) Of interest is the name of the jacket illustrator. Anyone can bear the name of one revolutionary killer, but you are really something if you bear the name of two. And that's the case with Ho Che Anderson. Kind of a shame that "Anderson" has to be so bland—so non-murderous.

■ NR will review the new biographies of Ayn Rand in due course. We reviewed another Rand-related book once upon a time ("Out of a lifetime of reading, I can recall no other book in which a tone of overriding arrogance was so implacably sustained. Its shrillness is without reprieve. Its dogmatism is without appeal"—Whittaker Chambers on *Atlas Shrugged*, Dec. 28, 1957). Rand's abilities as a storyteller are hardly controversial: She still sells hundreds of thousands of copies a year, 52 years later. The financial crisis and the Obama crisis have made her analysis of liberalism and the welfare state timely again. She admired the country she came to as a refugee from Communism. But the most glaring weakness of her thought glares still. A political movement one of whose premises is that theists are stupid and theism wicked is a non-starter in the United States—and would have been with every one of its founders, including Jefferson and Thomas Paine.

■ Claude Lévi-Strauss was one of the outstanding intellectuals of the 20th century. A Jewish Parisian born in 1908, he was an anthropologist, primarily. But he was also a thinker and researcher of diverse talents and interests. Anthropology gives a practitioner license to investigate and comment on almost anything. Lévi-Strauss could write, too, and reached a mass audience. His books include *Tristes Tropiques*, *La Pensée Sauvage*,

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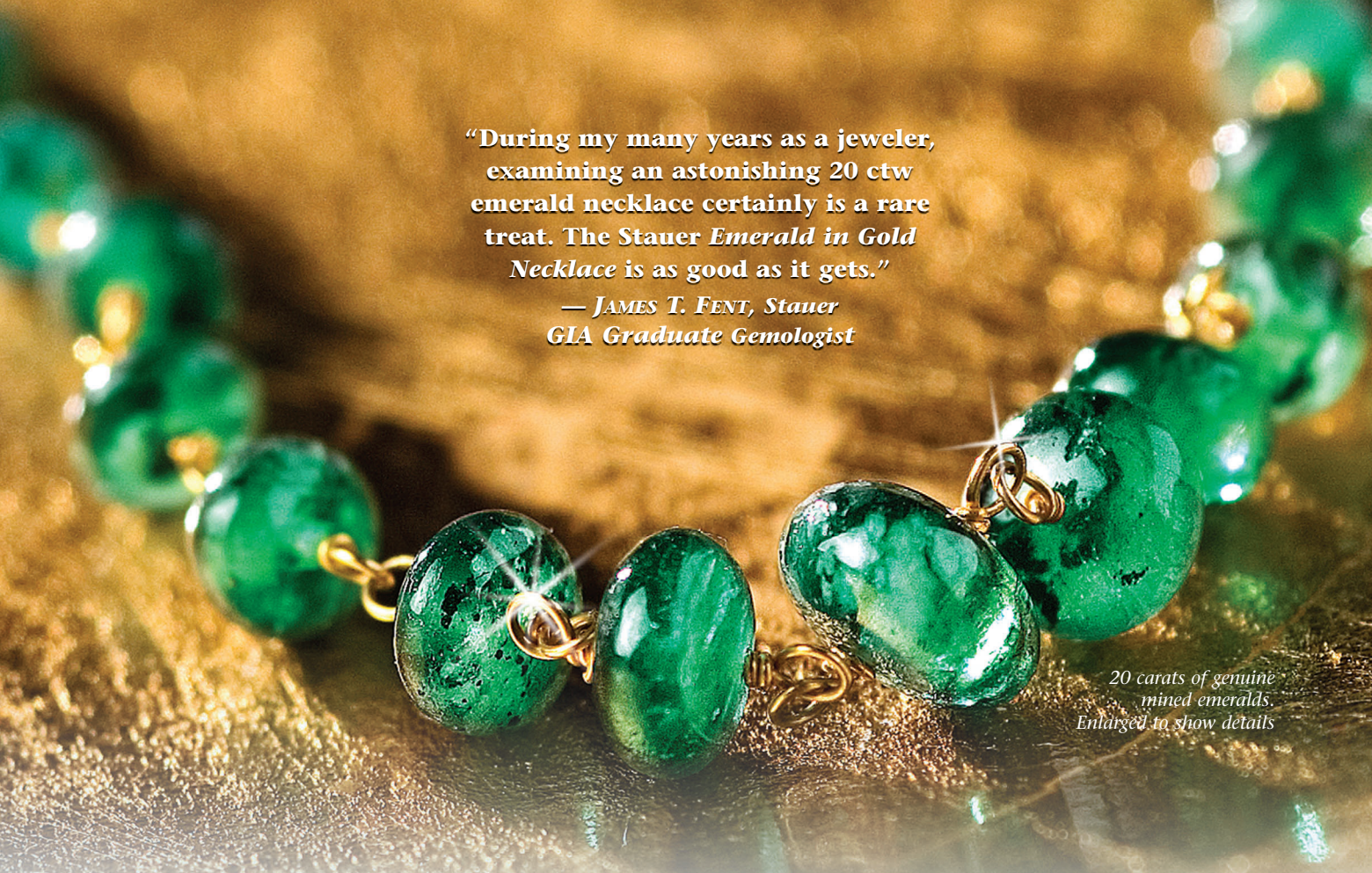
"During my many years as a jeweler, examining an astonishing 20 ctw emerald necklace certainly is a rare treat. The Stauer *Emerald in Gold Necklace* is as good as it gets."
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20 carats of genuine mined emeralds. Enlarged to show details

The Curse of the Perfect Gift

20 carats of polished natural emeralds linked with 14K gold for under $200!

It happened on our last trip to South America. After visiting the "Lost City" of Machu Picchu in Peru, we ventured through the mountains and down the Amazon into Brazil. In an old village we met a merchant with an impressive collection of spectacular, iridescent emeralds. Each gem was tumbled smooth and glistened like a perfect rain forest dew drop. But the price was so unbelievable, I was sure our interpreter had made a mistake.

But there was no mistake. And after returning home, I had 20 carats of these exquisite emeralds strung up in 14k gold and wrapped as a gift for my wife's birthday. That's when my trouble began. She loved it. Absolutely adored it. In fact, she rarely goes anywhere without the necklace and has basked in compliments from total strangers for months now.

So what's the problem? I'm never going to find an emerald deal this good again. In giving her such a perfect gift, I've made it impossible to top myself.

To make matters worse, my wife's become obsessed with emeralds. She can't stop sharing stories about how Cleopatra cherished the green gem above all others and how emeralds were worshiped by the Incas and Mayans and prized by Spanish conquistadors and Indian maharajahs. She's even buying into ancient beliefs that emeralds bring intelligence, well-being and good luck to anyone who wears them. I don't have the heart to tell her that I'm never going to find another deal this lucky.

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and *Mythologiques*. Early in his life, he did fieldwork in Brazil. He once said that, when in the Brazilian jungle, he felt close to Paris, and that, when in Paris, he felt close to the Brazilian jungle. He met and mixed with most of the anthropologists who ever were. (Anthropology is still a young discipline.) One of those was Franz Boas, the "Father of American Anthropology." In fact, Boas died in Lévi-Strauss's arms, in 1942. The two were having dinner at Columbia University's Faculty House when Boas suffered a heart attack. Lévi-Strauss died on October 30 of this year, a few weeks short of his 101st birthday. He was a big figure in a century crowded with big figures. And, in contrast with many of the famous, his life and work were not frivolous. R.I.P.

ELECTION 2009

The Comeback Begins

CONSERVATIVES scored some impressive victories on Election Day. In Virginia, Robert McDonnell won the governor's race in a landslide that carried other conservative statewide officeholders and legislative candidates to victory. New Jersey's Chris Christie won his race by a larger margin than any Republican had mustered since 1985—and as a candidate significantly to the right of previous Republican governors such as Tom Kean and Christie Todd Whitman. Maine repealed a law that accorded official recognition to same-sex unions as though they were marriages.

The disappointment of the evening came in a special election for Congress in upstate New York, where Conservative-party nominee Doug Hoffman narrowly lost to Democrat Bill Owens. Local GOP party officials bollixed the race from the beginning by picking liberal Dede Scozzafava. With her campaign sinking beneath the waves, she pulled out the weekend before the election and then capped her disastrous foray by endorsing Owens. Hoffman was a much better candidate, and demonstrated the passion that is animating the conservative grassroots on fiscal issues. But, a first-time candidate, he lacked polish and a ready knowledge of local issues. If there's a lesson from the race besides the obvious—don't let out-of-touch GOP officials pick liberal congressional candidates—it is that conservatives need to run campaigns based not only on their philosophical soundness but on the improved conditions that this soundness can be expected to generate. That was the template for McDonnell's huge victory. If his governance delivers on his promises, explicit and implicit, he will be a model for Republicans nationwide.

Democrats are taking solace in the banal truth that these elections were not solely referenda on President Obama. The Democratic candidate in Virginia ran a pathetic campaign, and the Democratic governor of New Jersey was a failure. The elections nonetheless offered proof (not that any should have been needed) that Obama cannot transfer his popularity to his allies. They showed that the powerful negative reaction to President Bush may have run its course. And they suggested that important aspects of Obama's agenda are encountering formidable resistance, not only from the core supporters of the Republican party but also from independent voters. We would not blame the president if he took up smoking again.

HEALTH CARE

The Inevitable Debacle

THE latest health-care bill, offered by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, is more of the same. Like every other Democratic bill before Congress, this "comprehensive reform" has two major features: First, it transforms insurance into a product that few rational people would buy. Second, it forces them to buy it.

Like the Baucus bill, Pelosi's alternative imposes massive costs on states and individuals so that its sponsors can describe it as "cheap" for the federal government. Like the Baucus bill, it contains disguised tax increases on middle-class Americans: In the case of Pelosi's bill, the chief subterfuge is to impose taxes on "the rich" with no adjustment for inflation; over time, more and more Americans will pay the higher taxes.

Pelosi's bill is being called "less liberal" than previous House bills because the government-run insurance program it creates would not be allowed to force bargain-basement rates on doctors. To dwell on this question—unless you are a lobbyist for one of the affected interests—is to miss the forest fire for the trees. The details of the "public option" are not what make the bill a mistake; and it would remain a mistake even if it lacked a public option altogether.

All of the Democratic bills are likely to increase premiums. All of them are too expensive, too coercive, too likely to generate government interference with medical practice, and too disruptive. All of them subsidize abortion. All of them reject incremental reform in favor of liberal hubris. House Republicans are wise to promote alternatives that are the opposite on every count.

None of this is to say that the differences between the Democratic bills have no import at all. They suggest that there is less than meets the eye to Democratic claims that passage of what they style "reform" is inevitable. Democrats have not agreed on how to pay for reform, for example, which is no small matter. Senate majority leader Harry Reid thought that a bill to increase Medicare payment rates would inevitably pass, too, and was surprised when 13 Democrats joined the Republicans in defeating it.

The Democrats' approach to health care remains unpopular. What seems most inevitable is that sooner or later they will pay for it politically.

McDONNELL: STEVE HELBER/AP CHRISTIE: HENNY RAY/AP

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What Won Virginia

Examining the strategy behind Bob McDonnell's victory

BY FRANK ATKINSON

It was Sept. 17, 2009, and Virginia's widely watched gubernatorial election had come to Tysons Corner. The contest was close, and Republican Bob McDonnell and Democrat Creigh Deeds were meeting in their second debate—an encounter that would prove decisive in the race. Northern Virginia's business and civic elites assembled for the event under the auspices of the influential Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce.

The audience was fairly reflective of the prosperous, vote-rich region: largely unconcerned with partisan preoccupations, ethnically diverse, right-leaning on business matters, moderate-to-liberal on cultural questions, in a near-constant state of agitation over traffic congestion, and—after eight months of one-party control across the Potomac—deeply troubled by the specter of unbridled federal spending, debt, and economic interventionism.

Deeds came to the suburban face-off encumbered by a rough-hewn style better suited to his rural legislative constituency but armed with the influential support of the *Washington Post*. Its endorsement had catapulted him from likely also-ran to runaway winner in the springtime Democratic primary, and its sleuthing had turned up McDonnell's provocative graduate-school thesis on social issues. Once unearthed in late August, the Republican's 20-year-old handiwork at Pat Robertson's Regent University had become the focus of a massive TV-ad assault by Deeds and his Democratic allies. The *Post* had deployed its powerful megaphone unrelentingly on Deeds's behalf, with a volume of thesis-related news and opinion pieces barely surpassed by the paper's coverage of the raging health-care and Afghanistan debates.

McDonnell, in whose campaign councils I participated, arrived on September 17 with a rare combination of personal and political assets. Having grown up in Northern Virginia, he claimed a special connection with the region and looked the suburban part. He had lavished attention on its main business organizations, including the Fairfax Chamber, during his years as a statewide candidate and attorney general. He also had reached out to the region's varied ethnic communities, earning goodwill and separating his candidacy from the damaged GOP brand. An endorsement by Sheila Johnson, a billionaire businesswoman and top Democratic donor, had demonstrated McDonnell's unusual cross-party appeal.

The Republican was in sync with the economic focus of the audience and the electorate. From his campaign's start, McDonnell had stressed his resolve to be a "jobs governor" and had stayed on message, offering a steady stream of policy ideas to achieve that end. He also had put forward a detailed transportation plan that, while controversial in some particulars, demonstrated his commitment to the issue.

Perhaps most important, McDonnell and his Fairfax Chamber audience shared a disdain for the Democratic agenda in D.C.—from trillion-dollar deficits and government-managed health care to cap-and-trade energy taxes and special dispensations for organized labor. Nowhere in the state were congressional liberals' efforts to remake America being watched more closely than in Northern Virginia, where national politics is local news.

As the debate unfolded, the candidates' contrasting styles were on display—to McDonnell's benefit. And three substantive developments would set the contours of the race for its final seven weeks, guaranteeing a landslide win for the Republican.

First, Deeds showed ambivalence about President Obama. Given the alarm over the president's policy agenda among independent voters, Deeds's reluctance to embrace Obama was understandable. But the cold shoulder he gave the president ticked off the White House and doomed Deeds to continued indifference among the Democratic base.

Second, Deeds persisted in pounding McDonnell for his decades-old thesis well after voters had tired of the issue. Though packed with moderates and women, the Fairfax Chamber audience responded with audible groans and some catcalls as Deeds repeated his familiar attacks. Missing that signal, Deeds and his handlers continued to spend millions in a vain attempt to define McDonnell as a loathsome culture warrior hostile to women's aspirations. But the attack's chief effect was to brand Deeds, not McDonnell: It gave the Dem-

ROMAN GENN

Mr. Atkinson, a Richmond lawyer, is the author of two books on Virginia politics. He served in the Reagan Justice Department and former Virginia governor George Allen's cabinet, and is a senior adviser to Robert F. McDonnell.

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ocrat a strikingly negative image and suggested he was oblivious to voters' concerns about the economy.

Third, Deeds fumbled on the question of taxes, setting in motion a string of events that left him on record as supporting $1 billion in new state taxes during a recession. During the September 17 encounter and post-debate interviews, Deeds bobbed and weaved on his tax plans. The *Post*, having previously praised the state senator for "courageously" voting to raise the gas tax, editorially signaled its chagrin and pressed Deeds to clarify. Boxed in by his powerful ally, the Democratic candidate dutifully declared his intentions, prompting a satisfied *Post* to proclaim that Deeds now had "unequivocally committed himself to support higher taxes." Over the next six weeks, that quotation would appear in several million dollars' worth of devastating ads by McDonnell and his supporters.

Following the debate, McDonnell continued to emphasize new policy ideas, prompting one supportive editorial page (that of the Fredericksburg *Free Lance-Star*) to crack that he had "a detailed plan for everything short of setting out your azaleas and flossing." More significant, he continued to remind Virginia's all-important independent voters of the national Democrats' job-killing agenda. Deeds's billion-dollar tax hike and primary-season utterances had more than established his link to the worrisome tax-spend-borrow spectacle across the Potomac.

Remarkably little of note happened in the campaign's final three fortnights—except the defection of Democratic former governor Doug Wilder, who pointedly declined to endorse Deeds more than a month before the election. The race turned into a rout of the entire Democratic ticket—facilitated, surprisingly, by the White House, which responded to its first taste of electoral adversity by anonymously trashing Deeds and his campaign two weeks before Election Day.

Even for hyper-competitive Virginia, where tables historically have turned quickly, the political reversal this year was stunning. The top-to-bottom GOP victories suggest that major forces, not modest influences, were at work.

For most of this decade, the Mark Warner–led Virginia Democrats have won in the state by denying tax-hike plans, downplaying polarizing social topics, and talking up bipartisan solutions on quality-of-life issues. Deeds trumpeted Warner's endorsement but rejected his approach on taxes and social issues, and it was Republican McDonnell who continually stressed his success as a bipartisan problem-solver. He impressively reestablished the broad center-right coalition that George Allen had assembled 16 years earlier and sustained through a string of GOP electoral and legislative wins in the 1990s.

The national scene contributed mightily to this year's transformation. Less than a year after Obama captured independent support and the state's electoral votes by capitalizing on Bush fatigue and economic unease, the sweeping agenda of the new president and his congressional allies had become *the* issue. Independent voters, who routinely decide elections in evenly divided Virginia, took flight in droves. And the "intensity gap" between the two parties, a factor in many off-year elections, was more pronounced than ever: Republicans were hungry and active; Democrats, sated and lethargic.

The irony was palpable. In the wake of the Democrats' historic national triumph, Deeds faced the same dilemma that had confounded Republicans during the waning Bush 43 presidency. If he embraced the president to energize his Democratic base, Deeds would stoke the ire of independent voters, who found so much to fear in the one-party domination and liberal activism of Obama's Washington. That dilemma seems likely to dog the Democrats in the 2010 midterm elections, since Virginia's ideologically balanced electorate is more or less a microcosm of the country's.

But if Republicans hope to re-create the magic that produced the GOP landslide in Virginia, they will have to study the ways of the candidate who made it possible. Atmospherics account for only so much in politics. Each election is still a choice between contrasting visions and policies. And the McDonnell candidacy represented a near-perfect match of man, mission, and moment.

McDonnell's first and most important strategic decision was to reject the false choice, routinely debated in GOP and conservative circles these days, between standing on issues that resonate with the conservative base and broadening one's appeal to moderate and independent voters. Both are crucial.

Since there are not enough Republicans and conservatives in a competitive state like Virginia to win with base support alone, the appeal to independent voters is a mathematical necessity. McDonnell never wavered from his conservative positions on life, the Second Amendment, property rights, and federalism, but he broadened the discussion to include issues on which conservatives and moderates agree—notably, the need for job-creating policies on taxes, spending, regulation, and labor. He was aided immeasurably by—and in turn reinforced—the reemergence of a clear partisan divide on these foundational economic and fiscal issues.

McDonnell also applied his principles—individual liberty, limited government, free enterprise—creatively to the solution of practical problems that motivate non-partisan voters. His transportation plan stressed innovative ways to deploy private capital and user fees in infrastructure development. His ideas on education emphasized choice, efficiency, and incentives for performance. His proposals for affordable new pathways to college degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math offered a vision of opportunity. His energy plan was comprehensive and entrepreneurial.

Tone was crucial, too. McDonnell eschewed the kind of polarizing rhetoric that turns off independent voters. He was unfailingly upbeat, respectful, and welcoming in his pronouncements, and was dignified and polished in his performances. This persona was not contrived, but rather reflected attributes McDonnell had exhibited throughout his public career.

A final factor of note is the quality of the campaign team McDonnell assembled. They understood and respected the candidate (not always true in campaigns) and mirrored McDonnell's focus and discipline. Their efforts were aided immeasurably by state and national party organizations. A rejuvenated Virginia Republican party was a constant thorn in Democrats' sides; the Republican National Committee and the Republican Governors Association countered Deeds's generous financial support from organized labor and gave helpful advice while resisting the temptation to dictate tactics.

Every campaign is different, and transplanting a strategic model from one to another is perilous. But McDonnell won resoundingly in a competitive state that a year earlier had given Barack Obama an easy victory. Since no one else in the country has accomplished that feat yet, it is probably worthy of serious attention. **NR**

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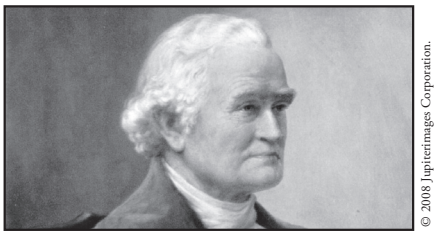
Dr. Lerer is Professor of Comparative Literature at Stanford University, where his awards include the Hoagland Prize for Undergraduate Teaching. A skilled lecturer,



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Dazed and Confused

The Israelis can't figure out U.S. policy. For that matter, who can?

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

WHEN I visited Israel in late October, not long before the latest visits of U.S. envoy George Mitchell and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Israelis of all political hues confessed that they were amazed, perplexed, and confused by the policy those two diplomats and President Obama are following.

First came an instant attitude of hostility on the part of the Obama administration toward Israel's new prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, even before he had taken office on March 31 and despite his efforts to create a centrist coalition. Second came its obsession with a "settlement freeze," which in fact was a demand for something that no Israeli prime minister of any party could possibly agree to—a complete and immediate freeze on construction not only in every settlement (including those Israel will obviously keep in any final-status agreement) but also in Israel's capital, Jerusalem. Third came the demand that Arab states reach out to Israel, a demand that the president himself delivered to the king of Saudi Arabia in a visit there in June and that, predictably, was rejected immediately.

Fourth came the administration's handling of the Palestinian leadership, which it pulled out onto the "settlement freeze" limb—for how could any Palestinian leader be less insistent on a total freeze than the Americans were? This meant that when the Obama team faced reality and dropped the freeze demand in favor of a call for "restraint," the Palestinians out on that limb were simply sawed off. Later, when American diplomats prevailed upon the Palestinian leadership not to ask the U.N. Human Rights Council to approve the Goldstone Report on Israeli conduct during the Gaza War, they added insult to injury. Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas seems to have accepted U.S. demands and instructed his delegation at the Human Rights Council in Geneva to cool it, a move that won him unprecedented unpopularity at home. He should have said no and simply told the U.S. to veto anything that arose in the Security Council, but the U.S. should not have pushed him. That the administration did so suggests a powerful American desire to avoid a veto, presumably because such actions are so "Cold War," so "George W. Bush"—and therefore far out of line with the Obama era of global engagement and multilateral action.

All of this has constituted a massive policy failure. The Obama administration has weakened the Palestinian leadership it meant to strengthen, weakened the alliance with Israel by its hostility to Israel's government, weakened its own reputation in Arab capitals for strength and reliability, and painted itself into a policy corner. For where does it go now?

It is still possible that Mitchell, who ought to resign or be fired on account of his gross misreading of the situation in the region, will get Netanyahu to sign some sort of construction moratorium. But we know the conditions: It will not apply to Jerusalem, it will be time-limited, it will permit construction of about 2,500 new units in various stages of preparation, and it will not apply to needed public buildings like clinics or schools. The Palestinian leadership will immediately denounce such a deal, which is not what they thought Mitchell and Obama were demanding. They will not agree to commence peace negotiations on such a basis; indeed, on October 31, Abbas so stated when he met with Secretary Clinton in Abu Dhabi. And if they did start such negotiations, which is the fervent desire of the Obama administration, nothing could possibly come of them right now. Abbas is too weak (partly thanks to us) and too close to elections (called for January, though few believe they'll actually take place then) to undertake serious negotiations at the moment. And remember: Last year, Israel's then–prime minister, Ehud Olmert, made Abbas a peace offer that was so generous it probably couldn't have carried in Olmert's own cabinet. Abbas turned that one down, so it's hard to believe that anything Netanyahu offers now might be acceptable to the Palestinians.

So what has Mitchell achieved for all his travel and all his posturing? Nothing. Actually, worse than nothing: Mitchell has managed to obscure the only good news emerging from the area, which is the continuing improvement in life on the West Bank. More jobs, more freedom of movement, more law and order are apparent in 2009. But that's usually mentioned in the fifth paragraph of any administration statement. If Obama had used all his early prestige last winter to ask Arab states to embrace the Palestinians (rather than to embrace Israel, which was an impossible goal), perhaps he'd have gotten somewhere. Perhaps the PA would today have the funds to build more schools and roads and hospitals—and jails, for that matter.

American policy under Obama has aligned itself in a curious and possibly unintended way with the worst elements of Arab policy. Like that of the Arabs, it is cold toward Israel: Despite several visits to the region, the president has skipped Israel, and the White House's aloofness toward Netanyahu is obvious. This posture makes

DAVID SILVERMAN/AP

Netanyahu and Mitchell in Jerusalem

Mr. Abrams is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. He served as the deputy national security adviser handling Middle Eastern affairs in the George W. Bush administration.

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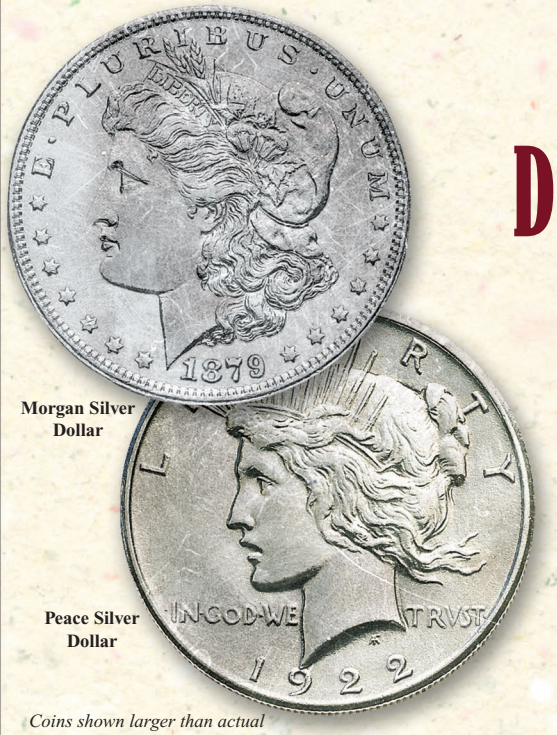

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peace far harder to achieve. Again like Arab policy, it is warm toward the Palestinians in ways that hurt the Palestinian leaders more than help them. That is, the rhetoric is warm but little or nothing is actually done to assist them, and they emerge weaker with every passing month. Again like the Arab approach, it puts a premium on rhetoric, negotiations, and diplomacy, with few sensible concrete steps.

Israelis watch all of this and wonder whether it is intended, or rather the product of the Obama team's incompetence. I was asked repeatedly during my visit: What are they doing? What do they *think* they are doing? Do they realize it isn't working? Is there a learning curve?

Meanwhile, Israelis watch Obama's handling of Iran, which for them is a deadly serious matter. They note that the administration congratulated itself on winning Russian president Dmitry Medvedev's agreement for more sanctions, but they see that there actually was no agreement. They watched as administration spokesmen smugly said they'd gotten more from Iran in just days of talks than Bush had in eight years of hostility, but then saw Iran's "agreement" to export almost all of its low-enriched uranium evaporate over the following weeks.

These episodes do not instill confidence that the mishandling of Israeli-Palestinian affairs is a temporary aberration; instead they make Israelis suspect that the administration's approach to world politics is simply naïve, and more given to self-congratulation than to making tough choices. The president's decision on Afghanistan plays a role here too, for Israelis—like many Americans—wonder whether the dithering of recent weeks bespeaks a lack of "grit." As in Iran, North Korea, Russia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere, including downtown Washington, an Obama decision to overrule Gen. Stanley McChrystal or to offer him half of what he says he needs will be carefully noted in the Kirya, the headquarters of the Israel Defense Forces. Israelis want a strong, tough America, and they want to be its ally. A weak administration, whose judgment about the Middle East and about world politics is erroneous and often naïve, and that expresses a coolness to Israel and an indifference to the threats it faces, is an Israeli nightmare. Maybe feeling confused is their way of holding off the conclusion that that's just what they've got in Obama. NR

The View From Man Bear Pig

On the ground in Afghanistan, it's still a question of power, not politics

BY BING WEST

Outpost Man Bear Pig

AFTER the AK rounds cracked over the sandbags, Sgt. Robert Kightlinger, 23, of Jackson, Calif., muttered "Insolent bastards" and led a dozen Marines and Afghan soldiers outside the wire in pursuit. Leaving behind six Marines to guard this isolated outpost in Helmand province, they bounded across dry poppy fields and soon found cartridges dropped by the shooters. A kilometer farther on, their attackers stopped to fire from a mosque. The mosque was off-limits unless the Marines could positively identify an enemy holding a rifle. Instead of providing the Marines with that opportunity, the shooters slipped away.

As we walked back, Sergeant Kightlinger bumped into a prominent local farmer. "When those Taliban cut across your fields, they put your family in danger," Kightlinger said. "Tell them to stay away or point them out to me—right now!"

"I can't," the farmer pleaded, drawing a finger across his neck before hurrying away.

It was my third visit since April to rifle companies in northern and southern Afghanistan. In all, those visits included 40 to 50 *shuras* (meetings with village elders) and patrols. Some of those patrols stayed on the move for several days, and there were numerous small-arms engagements. In the field, I talked with about 500 American, British, and Afghan troops of all ranks.

Kightlinger's squad was typical. They were manning one of two dozen outposts nestled among 75,000 residents in a remote district called Nawa. In June, many observers had doubted the wisdom of inserting a Marine brigade into Helmand, which is the center of the world's heroin supply. All summer, the district market had stood empty; by October thousands of farmers were gathering to trade produce.

But five months has not erased years of distrust and turbulence. After the district governor met with the elders in a key village, the Taliban called their own meeting, which was attended by several of the same elders. The population, though thankful for the security, was hedging its bets. They know the Marines will not stay forever. Billions of dollars already have been spent in development projects to make Americans feel good about our generosity, but nation-building is an endless task. The tribes expect everything but give nothing in return.

It is not obvious that winning the hearts and minds of village elders, or linking villages to Kabul, wins the war. Our soldiers note that the Afghans are happy to accept what we give them but do not reciprocate by turning against the Taliban. The elders don't raise militias or secure recruits for the army, and they don't fight; there has been no replay of that scene from *The Magnificent Seven* in which the terrorized villagers finally rise up against their oppressors. Instead, fearful locals plead with migratory Taliban gangs to move on. A rural population, no matter how content with its government, cannot stand up to such a tough enemy.

This enemy fights with the elusive cunning of Apaches. Unencumbered by armor and hardy of foot, the assorted insurgent groups loosely known as "taliban with a small 't'" engage in maneuver warfare. Weighed down by their heavy gear, our troops respond with firepower. Local police turn a blind eye to the ubiquitous watchers—called "dickers"—who warn the Taliban about most of our patrols. Tribal relationships ensure that there are few arrests. By shooting from concealment at a distance, the enemy can proclaim his tribal or jihadist determination but stay alive. We are in a war of attrition, not one of decisive confrontations—a war that pits the will of NATO against the endurance of enemies who can retreat to sanctuary in Pakistan, behind a porous 2,400-kilometer border.

Because of that unsecured border, a strong Afghan security force will remain essential even after most of the country's

Mr. West served as a Marine infantryman in Vietnam and as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs in the Reagan administration.

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districts have been pacified. We are creating Afghan security forces in our image: They wear heavy armor and rely on our medevacs and artillery. To support them, we're probably going to have to spend $20 billion to $40 billion annually for years to come, on top of the cost of U.S. combat units.

That will require a lot of support from Congress. But there is one important and relatively inexpensive move that Congress should make immediately: Useless and corrupt Afghan officers cling to command because there are no pensions, and Congress could boost the effectiveness of the entire Afghan army by funding its pensions in return for a stipulation that the Coalition be given a real voice in forcing incompetent and corrupt leaders to retire.

Until the Afghan forces are more capable, security will require that the Coalition employ what are called "framework" ops, defined as meetings in villages or districts, combined with thousands of patrols that occasionally are punctuated by enemy contact. Tribal elders will not wean their young men from the Taliban without such aggressive patrols, which would suggest the United States seriously intends victory. Implacable pressure in every firefight and incessant patrolling are critical. But risk-avoidance regulations handed down from the top are frustrating our rifle companies.

General McChrystal's assessment held that units should take risks equivalent to those run by the population, but senior staffs have altered none of the directives installed to minimize risk. Only a four-star may remove his body armor without reprimand. Many units insist upon 16 U.S. troops and four armored vehicles on each patrol. Eventually, companies stop trying to evade these restrictive rules and settle into status quo routines. In theory, we endorse small-unit initiative; in practice, we frequently prevent it.

Constant patrolling (the squad at Man Bear Pig patrols twice a day) is easier for the Marines, who do seven months, than for Army soldiers, who are assigned for a year—and a year on the line is too long when General McChrystal's strategy demands constant patrolling among the people.

Driving the insurgents away from the population primarily by military means was Phase I of the counterinsurgency strategy. Phase II requires replacing the Coalition presence with competent Afghan leaders, which means instituting responsible Afghan governance. That project will fail if Karzai continues his dodgy ways. "Governance, not security, is my main concern," an important NATO general told me. "Karzai governs by an informal network that ignores his own chain of command."

Pressuring Karzai depends on our succeeding in Phase I and not abandoning him. When Iraq was falling apart in 2006, Prime Minister Maliki caved in at first, trying to placate his enemies. Maliki exhibited decisiveness a year later only because the counterinsurgency strategy of General Petraeus and the attendant surge of American troops were succeeding. Similarly, Karzai and his clique are more likely to build a competent government once they can be confident of success on the ground.

General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker changed the course of the Iraq War by exploiting the change in Sunni attitudes. The Pashtun tribes, however, are deeply divided and lack the overall cohesiveness of the Iraqi tribal structure. Plus it's not their fight—not while their government exploits them rather than offers them incentives.

Well-founded doubt about Afghan national cohesiveness and self-reliance pervades all ranks in our military. Gone is the post-9/11 zeal. There is no shared definition of victory. To the troops, patrolling and meeting with village elders are jobs to be done while hoping to get home alive and uninjured. On the other hand, it was precisely the persistence and toughness of our grunts that persuaded the Iraqi Sunnis to come over to us, to the strongest tribe. Similarly, the Afghans understand the lethality of our riflemen as well as their decency. Our military succeeded in creating a capable Iraqi force; similarly, an acceptably governed Afghan state can emerge—provided we continue the fight for years. Whether we do depends on our political leadership, not our military. Morale and performance will decline if our leaders do not lead.

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Outpost Man Bear Pig—no electricity, no shelter, a handful of troops—represents the raw front line of the counterinsurgency strategy. Afghan soldiers remark that their poorest farmers live better than the Marines, but progress is more important than living conditions to our troops' morale. To the west of Man Bear Pig lies the town of Marjah, the hub of drug trafficking and insurgent activity throughout Helmand. At night, our Marines look at the glow of lights from Marjah and talk about the need for reinforcements to push the Taliban out. Seizing Marjah will throttle exports of opium and show the momentum of the McChrystal strategy, but it will require two more brigades in the south—and other American brigade commanders can point to Marjah-type strongholds that need to be cleared and held in their areas, too.

Barack Obama began his presidency by declaring that Afghanistan is a war of necessity, not choice, and that it must be won. In March he endorsed the counterinsurgency strategy, and our grunts are out there practicing counterinsurgency. The Afghan army is with them. If the war *is* to be won, that is how it will happen. High-level deals cut by Karzai or by American plenipotentiaries will not win over the Taliban. Afghanistan's fate will be determined by power at the district level. Afghan forces must mature, growing stronger and more willing to fight than the fundamentalists they face. That strategy is slowly working, but it takes a lot of manpower.

Washington owns the team but shouldn't call the plays. It's like the Redskins: The problem isn't the plays being called, but their execution. You have to trust the coaches—the generals actually in the field—to be in touch with their players. Obama is repeating Bush's 2001–06 mistake of accepting top-down wisdom. He risks becoming a geopolitical version of the Redskins' owner, Dan Snyder: a man who assembles an all-star cast in Washington that constantly refines the game plan but falters in the execution. America's dithering has made us look weak and has encouraged our enemies. Let us hope the president decides to send in the troops—and then stays out of the play-calling. **NR**

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Correan War

With help from an old friend of President Obama, Ecuador declares war on capitalism

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

ECUADOR is not a banana republic; it is a bananas, shrimp, flowers, and oil republic. Those products are the country's main exports, and earnings from them have declined as a result of the global economic slowdown and, perhaps more important, the misgovernance of Pres. Rafael Correa, the teacup Castro who is leading his country into despotism and disarray. Mr. Correa's response to his country's misfortunes has proceeded along classically authoritarian lines: He demonizes foreigners, particularly foreign businessmen, while conducting a campaign of theft and extortion against them.

An emergent anti-American autocrat never lacks friends among American progressives, and Mr. Correa enjoys the devotion of such notables as Kerry Kennedy, daughter of Robert F. Kennedy, and Daryl Hannah, the celluloid mermaid. He also was bolstered, at a critical juncture, by the support of Barack Obama. Mr. Correa is a master greenwasher, having convinced his admirers that he steals and extorts for the benefit of the environment and Ecuador's Indians. Never mind that the oil company he controls, Petroecuador, is among the country's main environmental problems, or that his forces kill the occasional uppity Indian, as happened in September during protests in Morona Santiago province. Mr. Correa's greenery is bogus, but the combination of an environmental crusade with wretched Indians and anti-corporate invective is catnip to the celebrity-activist set.

Among Mr. Correa's targets are American telecommunications companies. AT&T, MCI, and Sprint have been accused of conspiring to evade per-minute taxes on international calls, and Mr. Correa wants more than $100 million in reparations. His government has discovered a $500 million tax bill for the Spanish oil firm Repsol and a $350 million bill for the French energy company Perenco. He has unilaterally terminated contracts with oil companies, insisting that they reorder their businesses on terms of his own devising. Repsol and its Brazilian competitor, the state-owned Petrobras, gave in. Perenco's operations were seized and transferred to a firm owned by the Ecuadoran government, Petroamazonas. Mr. Correa accuses J. P. Morgan and Salomon Smith Barney of having profited improperly from bond deals and threatens to renege on Ecuador's debts. All of the country's banks have been ordered to repatriate 45 percent or more of assets held abroad. Smaller business operators report that bribery and corruption are rife and grow rifer.

It is an epic shakedown, and it is undeniable that Mr. Correa's government needs the money. Ecuador defaulted on a $31 million interest payment in December and a $135 million payment in March. The government threatens to default on 40 percent of its sovereign debt. Mr. Correa has bought much of what popularity he has, and he is going to need a lot more cash to keep his ratings high. He believes he has

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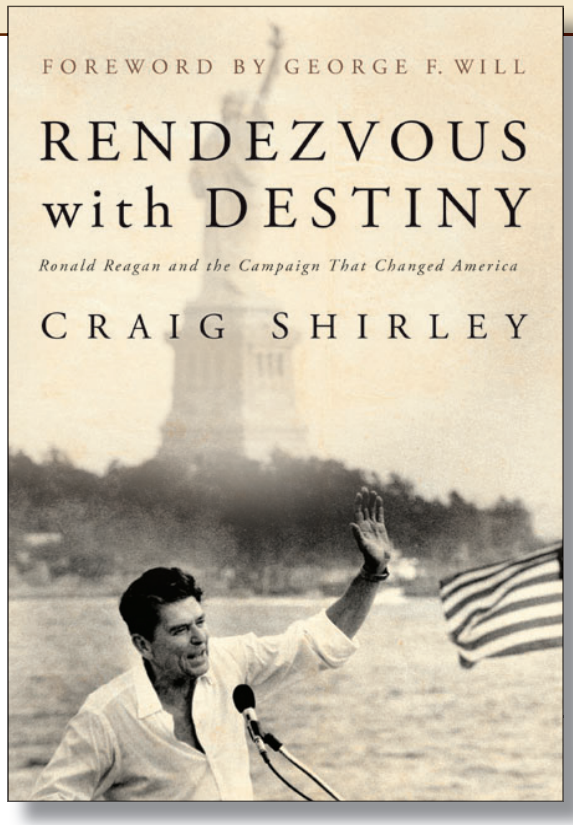

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hit a $27 billion jackpot with a case against Chevron, which inherited Texaco's operations in Ecuador when it acquired the firm in 2001.

It is Mr. Correa's crusade against Chevron that has attracted the interest of Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Hannah, and Mr. Obama. It has all the makings of an *Erin Brockovich*–style Hollywood jeremiad against corporate greed and environmental malfeasance: crude oil glooped around the rain forest, Indians suffering from poisoned drinking water, dead fish in lifeless rivers, corrupt judges—throw in a precocious kid and a wisecracking sidekick and the script practically writes itself. And it *is* a script: Much of what Chevron is accused of doing seems either not to have been done at all or to have been done by Petroecuador, the state-run oil company. The main difference is that in this case the corrupt politicians, rapacious lawyers, and tainted judges seem to be on the side of the environmentalists.

Texaco, which Chevron would acquire in 2001, had in 1992 determined to end its partnership with Petroecuador; in doing so it was obliged to "remediate" 116 oil-drilling sites—meaning it had to seal them up, clean them up, and minimize the environmental impact of its activities there. The remaining 204 sites were the responsibility of Petroecuador, the senior partner in the relationship. Texaco spent some $40 million on the remediation project, and Chevron seems to be proud of the work: Executives all but begged Scott Pelley of *60 Minutes*, who was working on a story about the Ecuador case, to come with them on a tour of their sites, but he declined. The pre-Correa government of Ecuador must have been pleased with the work as well, inasmuch as it certified that everything had been completed to the satisfaction of the authorities.

But that bit of settled business turned out to be anything but. One of the identifying features of a banana republic is its refusal to recognize the acts of the governments that preceded it, and Mr. Correa's regime has been true to form in that respect. Whether it is refusing to recognize debts incurred by previous administrations or dissolving contracts, Rafael Correa's operating assumption apparently is that the only legitimate contracts are those that were negotiated with Rafael Correa. (One remarkable deal found his brother, Fabricio Correa, receiving $80 million in government contracts.) Ecuador, under Mr. Correa's rule, apparently is to be regarded as having no continuous governmental authority. His government refuses to recognize the prior administration's dealings with Chevron, especially its release of the firm from future environmental liability.

That is a particularly sensitive point, because oil-extraction operations in the region did not end with Texaco's exit. Petroecuador continued to drill—and to spill—and, being a state-owned firm, it has taken an attitude toward environmental externalities that a U.S.-based company might regard as cavalier, and that at least one close observer has called "criminal." To the consternation of Chevron executives, the celebrity activists and journalists who travel to Ecuador to wallow in the environmental devastation invariably are taken to sites belonging to Petroecuador, not the sites that were remediated by Texaco. Chevron spokesman Don Campbell identified one of the polluted sites from the *60 Minutes* piece as "Shushufindi 38"—a Petroecuador site. He sent a frustrated e-mail to CBS news boss Sean MacManus, who apparently then sent Campbell an e-mail meant for *60 Minutes* staff, asking: "Why didn't we tale [*sic*] them up on their offer to visit the sites in Ecuador?" (A CBS delegation, minus Scott Pelley, subsequently made a visit that Chevron describes as perfunctory.) A famous picture of Ms. Hannah holding up a hand covered in crude likewise came from a Petroecuador site. Ms. Kennedy has not responded to Chevron's invitation to tour their sites.

Taking oil out of the ground can be an ugly business, environmentally and politically, and state-run oil companies historically have not been run by the nicest of men. And there is no question that Ecuador's Indians have suffered the ill effects of pollution. Much of that has little or nothing to do with oil: A great many of the drinking-water samples collected as evidence in the Chevron case were polluted with bacteria from human and animal waste; almost none showed pollution from petroleum. The plaintiffs in the case are seeking, among other things, $9.5 billion for damages relating to 1,401 cases of cancer, but Chevron protests that the plaintiffs have not yet been able to produce any actual cancer sufferers, and that there are no names, medical records, or other forms of documentation attached to the cancer claims. A study of the carcinogen benzene found nothing approaching dangerous levels, and an American court threw out evidence of a spike in cancer rates as unsubstantiated.

Practically every issue touching the Chevron case is in dispute, but it is difficult to deny that the legal proceedings have been corrupt. The first judge was forced to recuse himself after a bribery scandal in which he was recorded discussing his intention to rule against Chevron and mulling over the possible size of the award. Relatively little is known about the plaintiff in the lawsuit, the Amazon Defense Coalition, and it is not clear whether they or Mr. Correa's government would collect any settlement. ADC is principally represented by the American lawyer Steven Donziger, a Harvard classmate and former basketball buddy of Barack Obama's. That connection has served Mr. Donziger well. When Chevron challenged Ecuador's trade privileges under the Andean Trade Pact—arguing that its actions violated its treaty obligations—Mr. Donziger paid a visit to his old classmate, then a senator from Illinois not remarkable for his attention to the finer points of South American affairs. Senator Obama sent a letter to the U.S. trade representative arguing that that Ecuador's trade privileges should not be linked to the case against Chevron.

Mr. Obama's record here is remarkable: One of America's best allies in the region, Pres. Álvaro Uribe of Colombia, has been neglected, and a pending free-trade pact with his country has been smothered. But as a senator, Mr. Obama did find the time to intervene in a dodgy court case that could put $27 billion at the disposal of a budding leftist autocrat, with a generous cut going to American trial lawyers. The odds are long that any of that money would end up doing much to improve the lot of Ecuador's Indians, who want more say over the management of extraction industries and water rights in their region—a privilege Mr. Correa intends to deny them. But Mr. Correa has learned how to deal with opposition, too, with "neighborhood defense committees" recently established to terrorize his political opponents. With the overt support of Hugo Chávez and covert support from FARC guerrillas next door in Colombia, Mr. Correa is ready to fight his war on capitalism—and his campaign to get his hands on $27 billion of capitalists' capital. **NR**

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Critic-in-Chief

Obama's hour is also Charles Krauthammer's

BY JAY NORDLINGER

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER has been one of America's most important opinion journalists for about 25 years now. Since 1984, he has written a weekly column for the *Washington Post*, and that column is syndicated. From the early '80s until a few years ago, he had a column in *Time*. For almost 20 years, he has appeared each week on the television show *Inside Washington*. He has authored major statements concerning foreign policy: for example, "The Reagan Doctrine" (1985) and "Democratic Realism" (2004). Early on, he won the National Magazine Award and then the Pulitzer Prize (in commentary). In 2006, the *Financial Times* called him no less than the most influential commentator in America.

So, Charles Krauthammer has not exactly been a wallflower or nonentity. But since January 20, 2009, his fame, reach, and popularity has burgeoned. That is because he has been a brilliant critic of President Obama: a persistent, fearless, profound critic of Obama. Indeed, many conservatives, and some liberals as well, consider him the critic-in-chief. He has been on Obama's case constantly, for his errors and follies in policy both foreign and domestic. In a column last month, he said that the "commander-in-chief, young Hamlet, frets, demurs, agonizes." Krauthammer was speaking of the Afghan War. Only in August, Obama had declared Afghanistan to be "a war of necessity." Now the president seemed very much unsure. Krauthammer concluded his column, "Does anything he says remain operative beyond the fading of the audience applause?"

Krauthammer also has a big television presence, a tremendous platform: appearing almost every night on Fox News, specifically *Special Report with Bret Baier*, where he gives commentary. Fox has rattled the president and his administration, as they have not bothered disguising. Krauthammer is a key part of what you may call the Fox resistance to Obama. There is precedent for the intellectual as television star: Malcolm Muggeridge in Britain, William F. Buckley Jr. in America. But the precedents are few.

"So, did you ever expect to be a TV star?" That was an opening question from NATIONAL REVIEW in a recent interview. "I never expected to be doing any of this," said Krauthammer: not the writing, not the influencing, not any of it. "My life was going to be something completely different." Krauthammer occupies a large office in Washington, D.C. Around the office are at least two chess boards, reminding a visitor that Krauthammer is a chess whiz. He has been known to play with another such whiz, Natan Sharansky, the Israeli politician and former resident of the Soviet Gulag. Sharansky used to play chess in his head, during his (brutal) years as a prisoner. Krauthammer likes to joke with him that he, Sharansky, has an unfair advantage: He got to work on his chess for nine years in the Gulag, while others, elsewhere, had to go out and make a living.

Krauthammer was born in 1950, in New York City. But, when he was six, his family moved to Montreal, where he grew up. He later realized that he could not stay in Quebec, to make his career. The reason was this: He thought he would like to have a role in public life—maybe something in government. And, to be blunt about it, Quebec was no place for a Jew with that kind of ambition. Its political culture was more like that of Europe than like that of English Canada or America. A Jew was always an outsider, or even an "alien" element. Besides which, Quebec's politics were consumed with one issue: separatism, independence. To Krauthammer, this was "one of the most trivial issues on the planet," and certainly not one to spend a life or career on. Krauthammer

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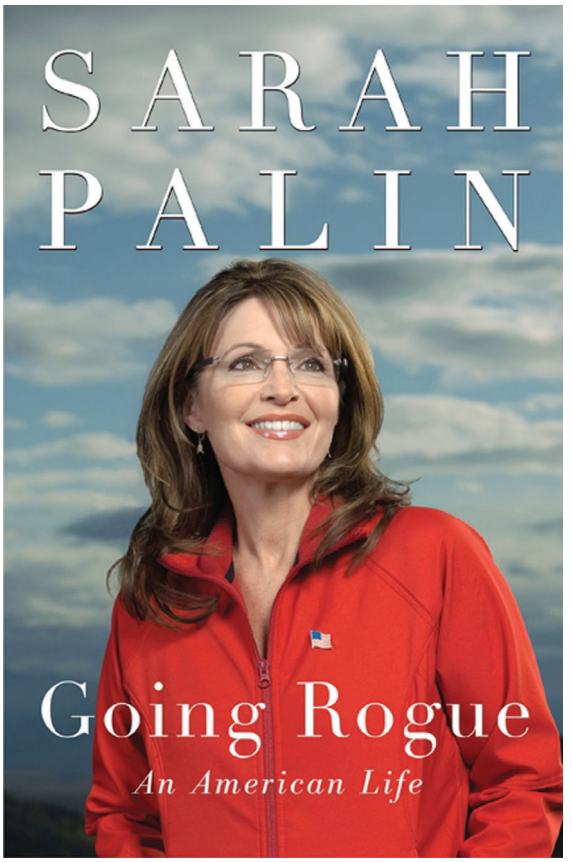

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retains a deep general admiration for Canada, whatever its flaws and annoyances.

Initially, he wanted to be a scientist: "I love physics, that was really where my heart was." But when he was 16, he figured that he would never reach the level "where the imagination comes into play. I was never going to be that good. And I didn't want to be second-rate in a field where only great minds matter." As a friend of his said to him, "Do you really want to end up testing steel for General Motors?" Krauthammer entered McGill University, the renowned institution in Montreal. He was torn between medicine and political philosophy. In time, he became an M.D., a psychiatrist. But "I never wanted to be a doctor. I was from a family of doctors, and it was expected." At McGill, he concentrated, not on a science, but on political theory and economics. Then he applied to four medical schools, and was accepted by all of them. He chose Harvard, deferring. Off he went to Oxford, to study political philosophy as a Commonwealth Scholar. His main teacher there was John Plamenatz, author of *Man and Society*. But, by the end of the first year, he had had his fill. "It was all abstraction," he says, "bearing no relation to the real world."

Off he went to Harvard Medical School, for a different kind of life. He reasoned that psychiatry was the right field for him, standing halfway between science and humanism. "It turned out to be the worst of both worlds," says Krauthammer, having "the precision of philosophy and the human quality of mathematics." He did a three-year residency at Massachusetts General, serving as chief resident the final year. But he promptly gave up psychiatry, with no regrets. You may wonder whether he ever applies his psychiatric knowledge to his analysis of politics. He has been known to joke, "As a professional, I diagnose Senator X with . . ."—but the real answer is no. "Psychiatry has no application to politics," he says, "and anyone who pretends it does is a fraud." Psychohistory, such as that practiced by the late Erik Erikson, author of *Young Man Luther* (as in Martin), is particularly obnoxious to him.

In his first year of medical school, Krauthammer suffered an injury, leaving him paralyzed, confined to a wheelchair. He was hospitalized for a year, but graduated with his class. All he has accomplished, he has accomplished under exceedingly difficult circumstances, barely comprehensible by able-bodied people. And he never speaks of it.

KRAUTHAMMER has undergone some philosophical changes, although not the most dramatic ones. Early in his life, he was a social democrat, hawkish on foreign policy, "liberal" (in the modern American sense) on domestic policy. When he was a senior in college, he became editor of the *McGill Daily*. He was 19 years old, having begun college at 16. He took the leadership of the paper from Maoists—bona fide Maoists—and said that he wanted to open up the paper to all points of view (something the Maoists were not permitting, to put it mildly). His opening editorial is a ringing affirmation of pluralism. In McGill's environment, that made him practically right-wing. The present-day Krauthammer says, "I have not had the great journey from Trotsky. If I was ever a Trotskyite, it was probably for a weekend, and I had such a good time I don't remember." Sometime in his student career, he read Isaiah Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty*, and that, along with John Stuart Mill, gave him something like a foundation.

In America, the politician he most admired was Sen. Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson, the Democrat and Cold Warrior from Washington State. He handed out leaflets for Jackson during the 1976 presidential primaries—handed them out right in Mass General. When it came time for the first Jackson Memorial Lecture, the family asked Krauthammer to give it. ("The Unipolar Moment," 1990.) In 1978, post–Mass General, Krauthammer went to work in the Carter administration, taking a role in mental-health research. During the 1980 campaign, he found himself on the speechwriting team of Vice President Mondale. "I loved him," he says, and this fondness persists, at a personal level. As for Candidate Reagan, "I thought he was a bit scary. I didn't take him seriously, intellectually—I got him wrong. I thought he was going to be too radical, not on the foreign stuff, but on the domestic."

After the defeat of Carter-Mondale, Krauthammer joined the staff of *The New Republic*. In fact, he started on Inauguration Day, when Reagan and Bush were being sworn in, and the American hostages in Iran were being released. While at *The New Republic*, he wrote sterling essays of tough-minded liberalism. People of various stripes felt they had to read them, and wanted to read them. By 1984, he was not so Democratic—he did not vote in the election that year. He would have voted for Reagan, in a very tight race: if he had had some theoretical decisive vote. But he stayed home from the polls out of respect for Mondale, now the Democratic nominee. What had caused the shift in Krauthammer's political thinking? According to him, it was more a shift in the Democrats: They were completely irresponsible out of power. For instance, they promoted a nuclear freeze, and they opposed almost everything that contributed to the Soviet Union's eventual collapse. There was more, however—more than foreign policy in Krauthammer's shifting. Like a good many others, he read *Losing Ground*, the book by Charles Murray about the effects of a welfare state on the poor. "I have a little bit of a science background," he says with understatement, "and I'm open to empirical evidence." Murray provided that evidence, convulsively. It is one thing if welfare is failing to help the poor, another if it is outright hurting them.

Krauthammer says that he never had a wisp of guilt or sheepishness about leaving the Democrats for the Republicans—never felt he was consorting with a lower class of people, never tried to hide or fudge his views. On the contrary, he was "rather proud" to vote Republican, thinking that they had done a good job. And he managed his transition without losing any friends on the left.

What sort of conservative is he? He will not reject the label "neocon," if you try to pin it on him. But he is well aware that the word has come to mean something not especially complimentary: "war-mongering Jew," in essence. "Neocon" is a codeword, he says, that allows people to say anti-Semitic things that otherwise would be difficult to say, in public. One thing he likes to do in debate, when called a "neocon," is say, "What's a neocon?" That tends to flummox an opponent. Still, he will not reject the label, noting that it can indicate a way of looking at the world. The late Irving Kristol, father of neoconservatism, famously gave "two cheers for capitalism." How about Krauthammer? He admires Kristol no end, and has much in common with him. But he will go as high as "2.8 cheers"—impressive for someone who once supported LBJ's Great Society.

Readers may want to know Krauthammer's position on abortion—it is slightly complicated. The first thing to say is that he is for legal abortion. But other things follow. "Life begins at

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conception," he says, "there is no doubt about that." That is simply "a biological truth." But "personhood," in his view, is something else: a social construct and a legal category. And society has to determine, in some fashion, when the fetus is imbued with this "personhood." "I would outlaw all third-trimester abortions," continues Krauthammer. "I've seen abortions, as a medical student, and they are quite horrible. I detest them at any level, and I would outlaw them in the third trimester. That really is a human being, that really is murder—and partial-birth abortion is barbarism." In the middle stage of pregnancy, abortion is a "grave moral sin," Krauthammer believes, and "you should not do it lightly" and "you should feel bad about it." But he would not outlaw abortions at this stage. And he has no qualms whatever about abortion in the early stage.

Of Israel, Krauthammer has long been a leading student, defender, and explainer. Asked the bald question of whether Israel will survive, he says, "If it doesn't, I think it will mark the beginning of the terminal decay of Western civilization." He notes that he is not a believer. But he quotes from the Bible, where God tells Abraham—actually, Abram, at that point—"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." It is interesting, if only as a historical matter, that those nations that have been kind to the Jews have flourished, and those that have not, have not. Krauthammer points to Spain, after 1492. "And we don't even have to look at Germany, though that's an obvious example." Krauthammer believes that Israel needs two things to survive: the will to live, and the support of the United States. He believes that Israel has demonstrated a very great will to live, especially in its defeat of the "second intifada." And he has "great faith in the goodness of America," a goodness that will not let Israel go to the dogs. Europe could do all sorts of things to bedevil and imperil Israel: impose economic sanctions, prosecute Israeli soldiers, etc. But the key is America. And "if we ever reach a point where we become indifferent to Israel, that will mark a great turn in the soul of our country."

Many Jews, particularly American ones, are nervous or scornful about the support that American evangelicals have shown for Israel. They say that this support is double-edged, or bad news, or embarrassing. Krauthammer will have none of it. "I embrace their support unequivocally and with gratitude. And when I speak to Jewish groups, whether it's on the agenda or not, I make a point of scolding them. I say, 'You may not want to hear this, and you may not have me back, but I'm going to tell you something: It is disgraceful, un-American, un-Jewish, ungrateful, the way you treat people who are so good to the Jewish people. We are almost alone in the world. And here we have 50 million Americans who willingly and enthusiastically support us. You're going to throw them away, for what? Because of your prejudice.' Oh, I give 'em hell."

Krauthammer admires George W. Bush "for his political courage. He made a lot of mistakes, operationally and tactically, and that I don't admire. But I do admire his courage." First, Bush

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launched the Iraq War, though it entailed many risks. "He was at the height of his popularity, Afghanistan was a total success at the time, he could have *glided* for the next six years." But he went into Iraq "because he thought he had to do it. Now, we can argue about whether it was worth the costs, but he was willing to sacrifice his presidency." Moreover, Bush implemented the surge, and stuck with it—over the objections of pretty much everybody, including many of his own party in Congress. And what does Krauthammer make of Obama, broadly speaking? Is the president a liberal, a radical, what? "I think he's a social democrat in his concrete governing ambitions. He wants to make us more like Europe. That is what I discern from what he says and does. What he is inside, I have no idea, and we will never know."

He enjoys appearing on television, does this chess-playing intellectual, liking the "immediacy" of it. And he has a quip about "the genius of Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes" at Fox News: "They found a niche audience in television broadcasting: half the American people." The administration, along with many liberals and some conservatives, complains that Fox is not a real news network, just a partisan outlet. Krauthammer points to the show that features him, *Special Report*. The way you judge a news program, he says, is by a subject you know well. For example, if you witness a traffic accident, and later see three accounts of it, you know what is good reporting and what is not. Krauthammer knows the Middle East extremely well, having studied it almost daily for decades; and he knows international affairs in general. When he watches Fox, he says, he knows he is getting accurate and thorough depictions of what is happening. With other networks, not so much—especially where the Middle East is concerned. Of course, Fox has opinion shows too, and "they are more or less wild." Whether you like them is "a matter of taste." But the news show for which he is a commentator, "I am proud to be on."

Whether in writing or on the air, Krauthammer dissects President Obama and his administration with a rare combination of precision and abandon. His column often crackles, and its author seems full of energy. "It's a good time to be thinking," he says, and "I'm glad to be around for these days." Every columnist writes a "soft" column now and then—a column about sports, or fashion, or maybe a beloved former teacher. All summer long, Krauthammer was wanting to write a column about the Washington Nationals, the baseball team. But he never had the opportunity, because "Obama keeps coming at me like a fire hose." The president is always giving a conservative columnist something to warn about, correct, or condemn. It helps Krauthammer that he has no fear whatsoever when he writes: no fear of being called a racist, a right-winger, or other terrible things. He has the freedom to say what he thinks, consequences be damned. In this, he is like Thomas Sowell, to name one other columnist (columnist-intellectual). And he knows that his words give comfort and heart—plus ammunition—to those bewildered or dismayed by the present period, and unable to express themselves as a Krauthammer can.

In a recent exchange, a Washington conservative said that Krauthammer reminded him of something Edward R. Murrow said about Churchill: "He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle." A great many are doing this, of course, from Rush Limbaugh, with a mass audience, to skillful bloggers with hardly any audience at all. But no one is doing it better than Krauthammer, whose hour is now. **NR**

Tarnished STATE

But California can shine again

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

When traveling far from California, I, like many residents of the state, still have a bad habit of marking off the days until I can return home. Even in its current mess, the weather, the optimism of the people, and the natural beauty are addictive.

Some of the attraction is based on nostalgia. Forty years ago I used to sit on my grandfather's porch after the end of the raisin harvest and hear the septuagenarian go on about the wonders of the state. He was of the third successive generation to be born in the farmhouse south of Fresno (where my son, of the sixth, now lives). My grandfather used to smile in the warm October breeze and, as he gazed over the fall irrigation in the verdant vineyard, with Mt. Whitney looming far beyond, say: "Just look out there! My God, we are the luckiest people in the world to live here."

Indeed we were. He went on to explain in detail how a temperate climate, fertile soils, and hard-working Californians had combined to turn a rich landscape into an even richer agricultural bounty. I heard next how his grandmother's can-do generation had dug ditches to bring down the Sierra Nevada water, leveled the land with mules and tiny cast-iron scrapers, and developed productive new varieties of trees and vines.

Along with its natural and human riches, California has always enjoyed an amazing diversity of climate and terrain. In February I often leave a cabin in the Sierra near Henry Huntington's eponymous man-made lake, amid ten feet of snow, and, after a few hours of driving, walk in 70-degree weather to my office on the Stanford campus.

California is the nation's most populous state, at nearly 37 million, and if it were a country, it would have the world's eighth-largest economy. Yet there is still room for growth: Two-thirds of the area north of San Francisco remains sparsely inhabited and rich in minerals, farmland, and timber, and billions of barrels of untapped oil lie off the coast and in the southern interior. Meanwhile, the harbors at San Diego and San Francisco Bay are among the world's finest and busiest. California is the nation's richest and most diverse agricultural producer. Tourists flock to Disneyland, the Napa Valley vineyards, and Yosemite, Kings Canyon, Sequoia, and Death Valley national parks. Despite the inroads of globalization, Silicon Valley still leads the world in computer innovation, and Hollywood still reigns as the movie-making capital. Universities such as Stanford, Berkeley, USC, and UCLA continue to rank among the nation's finest.

How, then, has everything gone so wrong so fast? The state is

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in a mess far worse than its 1992–93 and 2002–03 financial crises, or the periodic natural calamities of earthquake, drought, mudslide, and wildfire. Odder still, most residents well understand the current symptoms, the underlying disease that accounts for them, and why the state is so susceptible to this self-induced malady in the first place; yet no cure is in sight.

Just three months after California raised taxes and cut services in an attempt to bridge a $24 billion budget shortfall, it is already broke. Once again it is begging and borrowing, issuing billions of dollars in bonds to raise cash—most of them rated barely above junk status.

We Californians pay among the highest income and sales taxes in the nation—the former exceeding 10 percent in the top brackets, and the latter 9 percent when local sales taxes are included. But the more taxes rise, the more budget revenues fall short of outlays, despite recent spending cuts to stave off bankruptcy.

In parts of California, housing prices are half of what they were in 2006. New-home construction in the Central Valley is almost nonexistent. Unemployment statewide has hit 12.2 percent, well over the national average. Doubt has spread that California's economy can offer its workers the large houses and easy lifestyles they previously took for their birthright. State politics has devolved into loud disputes over how to carve up a shrinking pie rather than how to expand it. And hundreds of thousands of acres of rich farmland lie idle, owing to ongoing fights over state and federal water deliveries.

Anywhere from 3 to 6 million illegal aliens burden the state's health, welfare, and criminal-justice systems. (No one knows the exact size of the undocumented population—either in California or in the nation at large—since vastly different measures are employed by supporters and opponents to either emphasize or downplay the problem.) In performance reviews of the nation's public schools, California ranks between 47th and 49th. California also runs the largest, most expensive, and most recidivism-prone state prison system in the country: Half of all parolees will end up back in prison within two years. Locking up 173,000 inmates—over 20 percent of them illegal aliens—costs taxpayers more than $8 billion a year. Though the system was recently expanded at great cost, it still is designed to hold only half of its present population.

This litany of ongoing crises could be expanded, but one gets the dismal picture well enough.

What caused all this?

Dissecting the California mess has become a national obsession. While the 2008 financial panic and the present recession have made things worse everywhere, California is a special case, its endemic problems going beyond those of the nation at large.

Most critics start with the gerrymandered legislature, which has increased state spending by 40 percent in the six-year tenure of would-be conservative governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The Governator once talked grandly of vetoing lavish spending bills and stopping girly-man liberals, but very shortly into his tenure, he caved before a union-subsidized negative-ad campaign. Term limits have not ensured more independent-minded legislators, but instead guaranteed endless generations of rookie lawmakers, all eager to grab quick headlines by spending more money on more special interests.

Yet if the expenditures of the last two decades had merely risen commensurate with population growth—factoring in rises in the cost of living—then even in these tough times, Californians would enjoy a $15 billion surplus. After adjustments for inflation, the state currently spends almost 20 percent more per capita than it did just eight years ago. In less than two decades, California's tax revenues have increased by 167 percent, but its voracious public spending has increased by 189 percent.

More than half of all public employees—from teachers and professors to nurses and secretaries—are unionized. The state's workers are among the highest-paid in the nation. During San Francisco's recent financial meltdown, it was reported that one city nurse made $350,000 per year. A municipal park ranger earned, with overtime, $188,000. With overtime, prison guards can make $100,000 a year. Sweetheart pension deals allow some California law-enforcement officers and firefighters to

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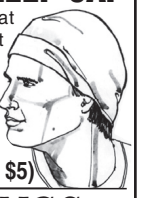

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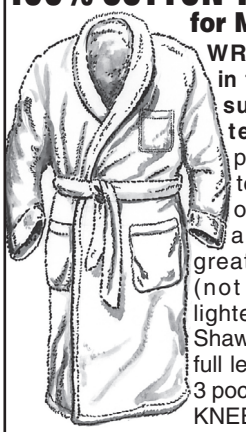

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retire in their early fifties with 90 percent compensation. Generous health-care expenditures for retired public employees are increasing at an average annual rate of 12 percent, while last year the state's two largest pension funds each lost a third of their value.

Public-employee unions are among the largest contributors to state politicians. Despite California's bankruptcy, unions fight, in often melodramatic fashion, any concession proposed by the governor to bridge the budget shortfall. In reaction to recent efforts to eliminate the Columbus Day state holiday, Angela Morales, job steward for Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1000, boasted that the holiday "has become the hill that our union is willing to die on."

To circumvent the dysfunctional legislative process, California's referendum system allows dozens of proposals to be placed on the ballot every two years for instant enactment by a 51 percent majority. This lets voters vent their frustrations of the moment—"three strikes and you're out," mandatory criminal sentencing, reduced public-school class size—without thinking about how to pay for their new mandates.

Idealistic federal and state judges, among the nation's most liberal, reflect the culture in which they live. Often they rule that the state must expand regulation, increase entitlements, or offer restitution, without any guidance on how to pay for the associated expenses. Teachers' unions have lobbied for higher pay, less accountability, and a curriculum stressing self-esteem—at precisely the time when massive immigration, both legal and illegal, has brought in millions of students without English fluency and in dire need of traditional education, causing white flight from failing metropolitan school districts in Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose.

Environmentalists have curtailed public use of thousands of acres of state land and restricted private land-use options—even as the population has skyrocketed. The result is millions of acres of untouched coast and mountains, a pristine north, and congested, high-priced living around Los Angeles and San Francisco. To drive along the Bay Area's northern corridor, around Interstate 280, is to see thousands of acres of open spaces and aging upscale communities of tiny but now million-dollar-plus homes. A sort of "I got mine" attitude leads entrenched coastal communities to shun the very conditions that once allowed their residents a chance at affordable housing.

Conservatives elsewhere point to California, with all its failures, as the proverbial canary in the coal mine—a warning about Obama's vision of an America of higher taxes, increased regulation, greater redistribution of property, more unionized employees, lax borders, environmental radicalism, and politicized education.

Revenue-hungry liberals counter that thanks to Proposition 13's limitations on property-tax rates, the state cannot get enough money out of wealthy home and business owners. They lament that a two-thirds vote of the legislature is needed to increase taxes or even set a budget. The easiest solution, according to public-employee unions and liberal lawmakers, is to raise corporate taxes, go after low-taxed residential properties, and put new surcharges on the wealthiest income brackets.

While partisans point their fingers, an odd pattern of mass migration during the last decade offers a better indicator of what went wrong. Millions of poor, uneducated newcomers from Latin America have moved north in the last three decades, while wealthier, better-educated California residents are heading east to low-tax states like Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and Florida. The Census Bureau records that between 2000 and 2007 the state experienced a net loss in population, owing to the departure of more than 3,000 residents a week. But the larger problem is a radical demographic readjustment, as higher-income earners leave and those in need of public assistance arrive, both citizens and illegal aliens.

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Until recently, California hosted about 40 percent of the nation's illegal aliens, at a cost of anywhere from $10 billion to $20 billion in state entitlements. Most illegal residents do not pay state income taxes, and many receive cash wages that do not include federal or state deductions—while they draw on entitlements and burden the criminal-justice system at rates greater than their percentage of the population. Admittedly, the state benefits from single, healthy, young, and minimum-wage immigrants, but this soon changes—as illegal aliens age, have larger-than-average families, suffer illness, and create social problems, costing more than they contributed in earlier years.

Few analysts talk about remittances, but of the estimated $50 billion per annum that until recently was sent from the United States to Latin America by illegal aliens and green-card holders, perhaps a third came out of the California economy. Remittances are a double whammy. Not only does the economy lose billions of dollars, but its lower-paid workers are left with vastly reduced spendable incomes. As a result, they cannot afford private health insurance, adequate housing, or higher education—so these things must be paid for by the state. In effect, the California taxpayer subsidizes the poor of Mexico.

Again, the problem of population loss does not hinge on the relatively small number of yearly departures from a state of nearly 37 million, or even the net loss in population of well over 150,000 per year, but on the income levels of those who left. Many of them balked at paying the higher taxes, or were tired of unaffordable housing, or chafed at government regulation and poor schools. Not all of those leaving the state were well off, but enough of them were to cripple the state's tax base. Currently

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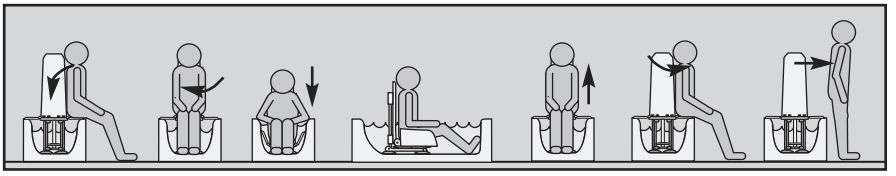

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144,000 of California's wealthiest residents—less than half of 1 percent of the population—pay almost half of the state's income taxes. Each time even one such resident leaves, the state loses the resources to provide services to many recipients of state entitlement.

Yet what drives much of the anger over the present mess is not just high taxes, but frustration that the taxpayers do not receive sufficient value for their forced contributions. Highly paid teachers and mandated small class sizes somehow have not improved California's schools. The nation's highest state gasoline taxes (47.4 cents per gallon) do not translate into safe, well-maintained roads. U.S. Route 101—California's longest highway, and one of its oldest, dating to 1926—is still not a continuous freeway, and in some places it remains a potholed, 1950s-style road. Portions of the overcrowded and dangerous State Route 99 are still just four lanes, usually in disrepair. A morning at a local Department of Motor Vehicles office can turn into an hours-long ordeal of glacially creeping lines. During my last such visit, there were twice as many closed counter windows as open ones. The few employees in the office actually serving the public wore purple SEIU T-shirts, emblazoned with slogans like "Organize" and "Solidarity," rather than something like "Service with a Smile."

What drives much of the anger over the present mess in California is not just high taxes, but frustration that the taxpayers do not receive sufficient value for their forced contributions.

WHAT makes California so susceptible to these afflictions? Again, the standard explanations do not quite suffice. True, the state's lotus-eating popular culture and idyllic weather attract hedonists, transients, impractical dreamers, and the parasitical. Yet from the 1950s through the 1970s California was a leader in transportation, education, and financial sobriety, under both Democratic governor Pat Brown and conservative Republican Ronald Reagan.

What went wrong is not just gerrymandered legislative districts, activist judges, ballot propositions, and constitutional requirements for two-thirds majorities. Those are manifestations of a deeper malady, the residue of past efforts, both conservative and liberal, to shake up the state. Conservative Californians—sick of crime and high taxes—passed ballot propositions to restrict the options of liberal public officials, who during budget crises often had cut essential services to shock voters into approving questionable pet entitlements. Liberal environmentalists used the same referendum process to institutionalize much of their no-growth agenda. Neither side worried about the resulting costs—or the underlying reasons for which the state had so much criminal activity to begin with, or for which those who had homes in nice places did not want others to have the same opportunity.

In short, the problem is us—the mercurial public of California. A certain therapeutic mindset of wanting things without regard for what they'll cost has set in. While this is a common trend in contemporary America, it has become gospel here in California.

Upscale northern Californian environmentalists fret that small marine life in San Francisco Bay needs more fresh water. They lobby the legislature, enlist their congressional representatives, and sue in federal courts to curtail both state and federally contracted irrigation deliveries to California's farms. Three-inch delta smelt may be saved by such water diversions, and perhaps a few fresh-water rivers will now support salmon as they flow untapped to the sea. But tens of thousands of farm laborers are put out of work, excellent land goes unfarmed, and millions of dollars in agricultural sales are lost to the state economy.

The well-intentioned environmentalist sees California's dilemmas in Manichean terms of good vs. bad choices—never bad vs. worse—and dreams that 37 million residents can maintain their present lifestyle within a pristine 19th-century landscape. Most green activists are well-off enough to avoid directly suffering the economic consequences of their utopian activism. For example, at least some of the Bay's water problems also result from too much ammonium, a byproduct of northern California's treated sewage and land runoff. But when the delta smelt suffocate, it is easier to criticize a corporate farmer far to the south for being a water hog than to blame nearby municipal wastewater plants, septic tanks, and local creek runoff for adding too much dirty water to the Bay and delta.

Pro-immigration groups have lobbied liberal cities not to cooperate with federal Border Patrol authorities. But many who support such "sanctuary" laws live in neighborhoods distant from barrios and send their children to charter or private schools. How moral is it for California's affluent, in their tony neighborhoods, to hire landscapers, nannies, and housekeepers, but not to live near, or send their children to school with, such low-wage-earning families—or care much about those who do?

Legal groups, to the delight of the media, have sued the state repeatedly in behalf of prisoners' rights. The result is that California's penal system has the most regulations and the highest costs per inmate of any in the country—$46,000 per prisoner per year. But most of these activists, again, can afford to pay higher taxes, and they insist on housing and schools that are far from the high-crime areas where the prisoners they have helped to achieve parole tend to congregate.

No-growth zoning statutes in the San Francisco Bay area favor older and wealthier homeowners who treasure greenbelts and untouched coastal hills near their backyards. A 50-year-old three-bedroom tract house in no-growth San Jose can still cost more than a palatial residence in the Midwest.

California, once a net oil exporter, now imports 60 percent of

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its oil. That shortfall is a result of steadily rising consumption, declining production, and new restrictions on exploration and exploitation. Yet despite the reduced output—214 million barrels last year, down from 394 million at the 1985 peak—experts guess that there may be at least another 4 billion barrels to be recovered in fields that are already being exploited. This summer Occidental Petroleum announced a new oil and gas find in Kern County with up to 250 million recoverable barrels. Some estimates put the available oil off California's shores at 10 billion barrels—enough to supply all the state's needs for nearly two decades.

Yet while California chooses to put off-limits much of its oil potential, and prefers to subsidize more costly biofuels and wind and solar energy, the irony is that this would-be green state remains the world's third-largest guzzler of petroleum after the United States and China.

Its energy ideals are at odds with its daily reality. One of the most inflammatory things I have ever said in a lecture was to innocently joke to an upscale Santa Barbara audience about the number of Volvo and Mercedes SUVs in the parking lot of the country club where I was speaking—and the disappointing absence of oil derricks off in the marine horizon. Outrage followed.

Finally, California has become Ground Zero of class, race, and gender tribalism, which hampers honest discussion of the state's ongoing crises. After publishing a book on illegal immigration, *Mexifornia*, I used to encounter hostile audiences who shouted that my use of the term "illegal alien" was blatantly racist. Yet the politically correct "undocumented worker" is an inexact term, since hundreds of thousands of them are not currently working, and most never had legal visas or documents to begin with. If we cannot talk precisely of the problem, how can we address it?

In November 2008 a ballot proposition banning gay marriage was passed. The results seem to have reflected higher-than-usual election participation of blacks, who turned out to vote for Barack Obama but traditionally have been unsympathetic to gay activism. Yet instead of citing that politically incorrect fact, the state's angry post-election gay demonstrations began targeting Mormons, as if they had been responsible.

University of California officials talk grandly of the need for more diversity on their campuses, mostly in lamentation that blacks and Hispanics are "underrepresented" at the flagship, but not racially diverse, campus at Berkeley. Rarely do they mention that whites are underrepresented there as well. To set policy in accordance with their utopian world of proportional admissions, they would have to deny entrance to thousands of Asian students—"remedying" the discrepancy between a roughly 10 percent Asian presence in the general population and a nearly 50 percent Asian enrollment at Berkeley.

In a recent survey of the California mess in Britain's *Observer*, the journalist Paul Harris dutifully traversed the state, interviewed dozens of people, both the prominent and hoi polloi, and analyzed the symptoms of decline—IOUs instead of state paychecks, massive unemployment in agricultural areas, crippling cuts to state education, foreclosures, and crashing housing prices.

But when it came to exploring causation, Harris never discussed in detail the soaring state spending, large increases in the size and compensation of the public workforce, crippling taxes on an entrepreneurial few, environmental restrictions on development, or reasons for cutoffs of irrigation deliveries. Instead, Harris was convinced that the state would be saved by slow-food trends, coupled with solar and wind power—to be ushered in by Alice Waters, the guru of Michelle Obama's victory garden, and Van Jones, the Obama administration's recently resigned "green jobs" czar.

The truth is that there are now three Californias, with two of them in alliance against the third. The dependent class—those who pass through the criminal-justice system, those who are residing in the state illegally, and those who are poor or on public assistance—can count on the big-government coalition of affluent journalists, politicians, academics, lawyers, jurists, and state employees to lobby for more entitlements and more public services.

Set against this alliance for greater state spending and higher taxes is the non-public productive class: the shrinking band of business owners, farmers, the self-employed, and workers in private industry. Not only are they asked to pay for the state's growing costs, they are the most likely to suffer economically from greater regulation, poorer schools, more crime, and endemic illegal immigration. And when budget crises hit, those who pay the highest income taxes are blamed for not paying even more.

Is there hope for California? Yes, in the sense that not even California can perpetually borrow what it will not be able to pay back. It can call the current 10 percent cuts in state employees' pay "furloughs," but for the employees, they are still cuts. It can deny that thousands are leaving the state, but it cannot ignore that Nevada is currently running ads on California television reminding residents why so many have voted with their feet. It can talk of a tolerable 10 percent top income-tax rate, but not on top of soaring federal income- and payroll-tax increases. As California hits bottom, there will be a growing realization, given its most unusual natural riches, that we don't need to do everything right, just to stop doing everything wrong.

There are already a few hopeful signs. The governor and the legislature have promised to reexamine the tax code. Illegal immigration is way down, as word gets out that jobs are scarce and once-easy state money is getting harder to collect. A growing, tax-paying Hispanic middle class, increasingly integrated, is beginning to turn fiscally conservative, tuning out the old La Raza tribalism and resenting subsidies for illegal immigrants who did not play by the rules but do raise everyone's taxes. The governor, and many in the Democratic legislature, are trying to expand the state water system's antiquated 1960s network of canals and dams—and to redefine farms and farm workers as more important than smelt.

Will any of this work? Only if the state's residents dare to speak candidly, without worry about being slurred as illiberal. Voters must not burden future generations or advocate short-term palliatives whose costs they will not bear. And pragmatic Californians should remember that if they do not produce their own oil and food, someone abroad will do it for them—in far less environmentally correct fashion.

It will ultimately be up to my son's cohort to reject the model of his father's generation—and instead to rediscover how his great-grandfather's breed gave us the California that we took for granted for far too long. **NR**

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UNHOLY Union

Why is the SEIU boss the White House's most frequent visitor?

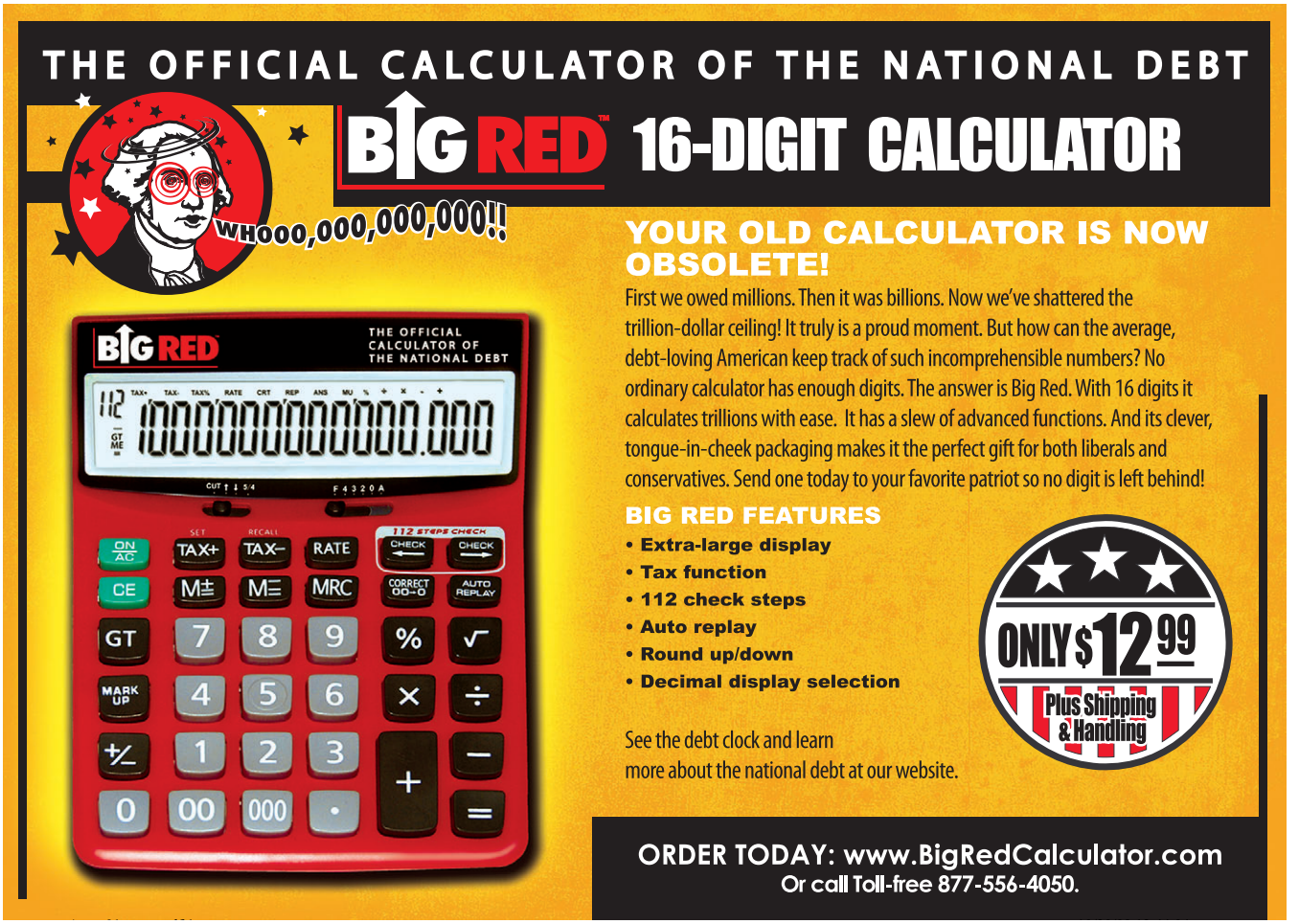
BY STEPHEN SPRUIELL

THE Friday before Halloween, in response to requests from the public, the White House released records of the visitors it had received between January and July. George Clooney, Oprah Winfrey, and Serena Williams were among the famous names on the list. But the man who appeared most frequently is less well-known. His name is Andrew Stern, and during the first six months of Obama's tenure, he visited the White House 21 times—about three times per month. Most of these visits included an intimate meeting with the president or other senior officials. Among outsiders, Stern enjoys unrivaled access to the White House. And the more you know about him, the spookier that sounds.

Stern is president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), a federation of health-care, public-sector, and custodial workers that claims approximately 2 million members. Stern replaced former president John Sweeney in 1996, the year after Sweeney won a bitterly fought battle for control of the AFL-CIO. At the time, Sweeney's win was viewed as a victory for the left wing of the labor movement. Ramesh Ponnuru wrote in these pages: "Many of the people in [Sweeney's] camp have backgrounds in the New Left." Andrew Stern certainly fits that description.

Stern lacks the traditional blue-collar pedigree of a union boss. In a profile of him for *The New Republic*, Bradford Plumer wrote, "Stern was part of a generation of idealistic union leaders who came to organized labor from college, not the factory floor." He started at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton business school in the late '60s, dabbled in student radicalism, changed his major, bummed around Europe, came back to the States, and went to work as a welfare case officer in Pennsylvania. SEIU had just organized his shop, and he got active in the union. He ended up as one of Sweeney's protégés, his successor, and, eventually, his bête noire.

In the 1950s, the percentage of American workers who belonged to a union peaked at around 34 percent. Today, that number is closer to 12 percent—7.6 if you're counting only private-sector jobs. Against this backdrop of declining union membership, Stern managed to double the size of SEIU in his first ten years as president. Other labor leaders stood in awe. In 2005, Stern engineered a break with the AFL-CIO over frustrations with Sweeney's leadership.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SEIU president Andrew Stern

Six other unions, including the Teamsters, followed Stern. The breakaways formed their own federation called Change to Win and adopted SEIU's one-two punch: intimidate businesses and, if that doesn't work, exploit their soft spot for corporate welfare.

On the intimidation front, SEIU has worked with the radical Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). The group once served as a valuable ally, but its reputation now lies in tatters thanks to a pair of amateur journalists who, costumed as pimp and hooker, filmed themselves obtaining advice from ACORN staffers on how best to shelter the proceeds of a child-prostitution ring from taxation.

SEIU did not sustain much damage from the scandal, even though, as a colleague of mine quipped, ACORN often acts as its paramilitary wing. SEIU's former political director, Patrick Gaspard, remains comfortably ensconced at the White House as political director—Obama's Karl Rove—and the connection does not appear to have hurt him.

The SEIU-ACORN link is deep and longstanding. At least one SEIU local, Chicago's Local 880, was organized by ACORN and run by it for 20 years. An SEIU official recently testified that the local had severed its ACORN ties, but Chris Berg, a former special assistant at the Office of Labor Management Standards, says, "I'm very skeptical." Keith Kelleher, who spent many years running ACORN in Chicago, is still the local's head organizer. "They've been wed together for so long, I don't think they can divorce," says Berg.

The local, which represents home health-care and child-care workers, attracted scrutiny when former governor Rod Blagojevich helped it secure a lucrative collective-bargaining agreement with the State of Illinois. Many cried foul, pointing to the $1.8 million that SEIU and ACORN had donated to Blagojevich's campaigns. This story surfaced again when Blagojevich concocted a scheme whereby he would appoint someone of Obama's choosing to Obama's old Senate seat in exchange for a six-figure sinecure at Change to Win. Obama and Stern are so close that Blagojevich thought a favor to one would be repaid by the other.

SEIU has given ACORN nearly $6 million since 2006—including $250,000 this year—according to U.S. Department of Labor disclosures and the union's own statements. Some of this money took the form of grants, but ACORN also received significant sums for doing the SEIU's dirty work. In 2007, the SEIU paid ACORN $140,000 to harass a shopping-mall operator called General Growth Properties that would not let the union use the card-check process to organize the company's janitors (more on card check later). According to the company, ACORN's tactics included "making allegations and filing unsubstantiated claims with government agencies, then implying in handbills and press releases that the claims—before they are even investigated, let alone proved—are fact."

SEIU isn't above these tactics, but it reserves its full attention for bigger targets, such as Bank of America. It has repeatedly tried to unionize Bank of America's workforce, to no avail. The government bailouts, however, offered the perfect opportunity for SEIU to launch what's known as a "corporate campaign" against the bank. Paul Levy, the CEO of a Boston hospital that has been on the receiving end of an SEIU corporate campaign, has written that the tactic "consists of publicly denigrating the reputation of the targeted [company], its senior management, and its board of trustees in an attempt to put pressure on the [company] to agree to certain concessions in the union certification process."

Over the past year, SEIU has helped organize dozens of protests over the size of executive bonuses at Bank of America. Stern's was one of the loudest voices calling for the ouster of CEO Ken Lewis for the bank's role in the financial crisis, even though its acquisition of troubled firms Countrywide and Merrill Lynch probably prevented the crisis from deepening. After Lewis was ousted following an SEIU campaign to deluge shareholders with inflammatory talking points, the union sent a letter to executive-pay czar Kenneth Feinberg asking him to seize Lewis's pension. "I'm not a cheerleader for B of A," University of North Carolina–Charlotte finance professor Tony Plath told the *Charlotte Business Journal* at the time. "But let's be objective about this: These attacks are all about card check."

SEIU's corporate campaigns, however effective, are nothing new. Stern's real breakthrough came when he realized that labor could offer a carrot as well as a stick Around 50 percent of SEIU's members work in the health-care industry as nurses, hospital attendants, and lab techs. The facilities that employ such workers benefit from a number of government programs. SEIU's pitch was simple: Let us organize your workforce, and we'll use our lobbying power to push for increased government spending on health care.

It worked. Fred Siegel and Dan DiSalvo recently observed in *The Weekly Standard* that, "under the brilliant leadership of Dennis Rivera, [SEIU Local] 1199 built a top-notch political operation, and with the hospitals, which were barred from political activity, formed a partnership to maximize the flow of government revenue." The alliance has been so successful, they wrote, that New York now spends as much on Medicaid as California and Texas combined. Rivera now serves as the SEIU's point man on national health-care-reform legislation, with over 400 union staff members working full time at his disposal. Sen. Chuck Schumer called him "one of the few key players" shaping the final bill.

In pursuit of his vision, Stern has turned the SEIU into a massive grassroots army that can mobilize in behalf of candidates and legislation. The scope of its activities in 2008 was epic. Stern bragged that "we spent a fortune to elect Barack Obama—$60.7 million, to be exact—and we're proud of it." Ironically, SEIU spent so much in 2008 that it had to take out massive loans to keep operating, including $10 million from—you guessed it—Bank of America. The cash crunch also forced SEIU to implement a round of layoffs,

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leading to a surreal hall-of-mirrors moment when the Union of Union Representatives filed a complaint against SEIU with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Undaunted, SEIU has set aside $85 million to spend over the next two years on political advocacy. The union started the year with three major objectives: a union-friendly stimulus, a union-friendly health-care bill, and a bill that would make it easier to organize workers into unions. It has brought its influence to bear on all three of these debates, with varying degrees of success.

Union-friendly stimulus: The stimulus bill was a top priority for SEIU because it contained massive bailouts for state governments and Medicaid. As mentioned above, states such as California, New York, and New Jersey have expanded their social-welfare systems beyond what they can afford, in response to pressures from SEIU and other public-sector unions. At the same time, their progressive income-tax structures have made them especially vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles. When the credit bubble burst, these states were looking at massive deficits, layoffs, furloughs, and budget cuts. The stimulus bill included a $50 billion slush fund for state governments and $90 billion in Medicaid expansions, helping the states avoid a necessary round of belt-tightening and tax reform.

The most illustrative example of SEIU's clout during this process came when the Obama administration threatened to withhold stimulus funds from the state of California if it went ahead with a planned reduction in payments to home health-care workers. The administration set up a conference call with state officials to discuss whether the cuts violated the terms of the stimulus, and state officials were surprised to learn that the administration had invited SEIU representatives to join the call. "This was really atypical and outside any norm I am familiar with," California secretary of health and human services Kim Belshe told the *Los Angeles Times*. The administration backed down from the threat, but only after the story had leaked and caused significant blowback.

Union-friendly health-care reform: During the month of August, when tea-party protesters showed up at town-hall meetings in droves to express their opposition to the Democrats' health-care plan, liberal commentators and members of Congress tried to portray the movement as "astroturf" (which, in political parlance, means fake grassroots). Democratic senator Barbara Boxer famously said that the protesters were too well-dressed to be anything other than corporate stooges. But, contra Boxer, the most visible trend by far in protest-wear at the town halls this summer was the purple SEIU T-shirt.

SEIU has poured millions into a group called Health Care for America Now, which has dispatched envoys to deliver portable pavilions, professionally printed placards, and uniform attire at almost every major health-care protest this year. Dennis Rivera sent hundreds of union activists to meetings this summer in an attempt to counteract opposition to the Democrats' bill. "We're running this campaign like this was a presidential campaign, and our candidate is health-care reform," Rivera told the *New York Times*. Why does SEIU care so much about health-care reform? The subsidies and mandates in Democrats' legislation would drive up demand for health-care services, meaning more revenue for hospitals, more health-care workers, and more members for SEIU.

The creation of a government-run insurance plan is an especially important priority for the SEIU. "The nexus between government and private industry would give SEIU a toehold to organize more workers," explains J. Justin Wilson, managing director of the Center for Union Facts. Once the public option is in place, SEIU can pressure the bureaucracy to implement union-friendly policies. For example, the public option "might only reimburse hospitals that are unionized or have a neutrality position toward unions," Wilson says.

So far, SEIU has been successful at getting most of its priorities included in the health-care bill. Democrats have renewed their commitment to the public option, which once looked dead on arrival. The only problem for organized labor concerns the excise tax on "Cadillac" health plans—plans that cost more than $8,000 per year for single coverage or $21,000 for family coverage—contained in the Senate Finance Committee's version of the legislation. The proposed tax evolved from Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus's earlier plan to raise revenue by taxing all employer-provided health benefits. Unions objected to that idea because many of them have negotiated generous benefit plans for their workers. Employers could be expected to scale back these plans to avoid the tax.

As a compromise, Sen. John Kerry proposed taxing only the most expensive plans, and the White House embraced this tax on "gold-plated Cadillac" plans because it sounded like the kind of tax-the-rich scheme that plays well with the Democrats' base. But a number of unions still objected, leading Democrats to propose an exemption from the tax for all benefits granted through collective bargaining. This obvious sop to organized labor was immediately ridiculed and never actually made it into the legislation. Soon after the Senate Finance Committee approved the tax on "Cadillac" plans, a group of 27 unions ran an ad criticizing it. Notably, SEIU was not among them. "We don't have a substantial disagreement with their point of view but we chose to communicate our views privately," Rivera told *The Hill* newspaper.

"I found it interesting that they weren't willing to sign on," says Berg, the former Department of Labor official. "The United Auto Workers union is the one that you think of being impacted by this, because they had negotiated these kinds of plans with the automakers. SEIU has become a bigger player because they've been rapidly expanding, but they've been organizing a lot of lower-income workers." Because the tax doesn't affect that many of its

SEIU started the year with three major objectives: A union-friendly stimulus, a union-friendly health-care bill, and a bill that would deprive workers deciding whether to unionize of the right to a secret ballot.

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)," in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians"and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millennium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements." When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews)—the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees." In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 60 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees—by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than sixty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million (!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war.

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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members, SEIU is thought to have quietly signaled that it would not oppose the tax too loudly if it proved necessary to the bill's passage.

Card-check legislation: As important as the Democrats' health-care plan is to SEIU, the union's top priority remains the Employee Free Choice Act, otherwise known as the card-check bill. Under SEIU's preferred version of the bill, employers would have to recognize a union once a majority of its employees had signed petition cards. This process would allow union organizers to identify holdouts and pressure them into signing up. The bill would also require business owners to allow union organizers to hold meetings with employees on the business's property, while forbidding the owners to hold mandatory meetings to discuss unionization.

Finally, the bill includes a binding-arbitration provision that would allow the NLRB to impose a union contract on a business if negotiations with its union broke down. SEIU loves this provision, because Obama just named one of its lawyers, Craig Becker, to the NLRB. Businesses negotiating with the SEIU would have two choices: accept SEIU's demands voluntarily or have the SEIU-friendly NLRB accept them for you.

THESE three goals have one thing in common: All are meant to raise the percentage of workers who belong to a union. State by state, unions are ensuring that the only employers eligible for stimulus money are those with union workforces. On health care, the Democrats' bill is designed to shift a mind-boggling amount of money into the health-care sector while increasing the government's administrative control over it—and anyone who believes the Democrats' rhetoric about cutting costs is encouraged to look at what Dennis Rivera accomplished in New York. Meanwhile, card-check legislation would throw open the doors of private businesses to union organizers and tie their hands when they try to resist.

This is good for unions, but it's even better for liberals. The past three decades have seen unions embrace left-wing positions on everything from affirmative action to gay marriage to the war in Iraq. (Times have changed: Former AFL-CIO president George Meany refused to support George McGovern because McGovern opposed the war in Vietnam.) The bigger unions grow, the more power they have, as Andrew Stern will tell anyone who will listen. Stern's obsession with size has embroiled the labor movement in some of the nastiest fights it has ever seen. Old-school union guys like Sal Roselli, a former Stern lieutenant whose National Union of Healthcare Workers split from SEIU earlier this year in a bitter divorce, told Bradford Plumer that "Stern's drive for growth at all costs" had caused him to ignore what was in the best interest of his members. But Andrew Stern was a liberal before he was a union organizer, just as Obama was a liberal before he was a community organizer. Unions may have existed to serve workers' interests at one time. These days, they exist to serve liberalism.

"The most important thing to note about what SEIU is doing is that it's really become a lobbying arm for the president," Berg says. "Much like Organizing for America [the community-organizing group run by the Democratic National Committee], they are trying to drive bodies nationwide to lobby their congressmen and senators to try to implement the president's agenda." Seen in that light, it is entirely unsurprising that Stern's name should be the one that appears most frequently in White House visitor logs. Obama and Stern are working together to make America a more liberal place, and they want you to join them. **NR**

The Road from 1989

Reflections on the greatest peaceful transformation in history

BY JOHN O'SULLIVAN

ON Inauguration Day 1989, NATIONAL REVIEW gave a celebratory dinner in Washington at which the guests included Jeane Kirkpatrick, Bill Safire, and the Soviet ambassador and his wife. Contrary to stereotypes, the ambassador was charming and his wife both charming and attractive. But what the ambassador said went beyond charm. He remarked, apparently in passing, that the Soviet Union had no interest in what kind of regimes existed in Eastern Europe. They were independent countries. What kind of government they had was a matter for the voters.

We had just heard what became known as the Sinatra Doctrine: They can do it their way. Safire took out his notebook and pen. He wanted to take down the lyrics.

"Does that mean they can leave the Warsaw Pact?" asked Jeane suspiciously, probably recalling that it was Hungary's decision to do so that had made a Soviet invasion inevitable.

"We would be sorry if they did so," replied the ambassador suavely, "but that's really a matter for them, not us." So the Brezhnev Doctrine—"once a socialist country, always a socialist country"—no longer applied either. When the ambassador left for his next dinner—his wife told me apologetically that they had three that night—we all fell to discussing the significance of his remark. Was it true? And even if it was, why had he told us? What was going on?

Of those present, I had the least excuse for being skeptical or surprised. Shortly before the dinner, our first issue of 1989 had hit the newsstands with a cover story by our roving correspondent, Radek Sikorski (now Poland's foreign minister), with the title "The Coming Crack-Up of Communism" and a picture of Lenin under shattered glass. There had been other forecasts of a Soviet collapse too—notably, Andrei Amalrik's book *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* Above all, we had just won the Cold War. Not everyone quite realizes that, because we tend to think that the collapse of Communism and the end of the Cold War were the same thing. In fact, the Cold War really ended in 1984—score one for Amalrik—when America's cruise and Pershing missiles were successfully stationed in Europe despite a massive "peace" campaign against their installation.

Gorbachev went to Geneva and Reykjavik with the intention of getting an arms-reduction agreement that would allow Moscow to argue that the Cold War had ended in a draw. He failed to get such an agreement because Reagan refused to abandon strategic missile defense. So he returned to Washington a year later and made all his previous concessions without getting his quid pro quo. America won the Cold War at that point.

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But Soviet Communism still ruled a large part of the world. Most observers in 1987 and 1988 expected that the two blocs would continue a peaceful competition of systems more or less indefinitely. It would not be hard to carry out a thought experiment—there's a different one below—about a world in which that happened. In such a world, socialism would not be a synonym for economic waste and collapse. European social-democratic parties would not have embraced the market (however inadequately). Moscow would regularly seek export credits and other subsidies. Etc., etc.

So what turned the Soviet defeat of 1984–86 into the Soviet dissolution of 1989–91? Take a look at the opening paragraph of Sikorski's article:

> An elderly woman in a peasant scarf lights a candle and kneels piously at the altar in the Vilnius Cathedral—recently restored to the Catholic Church after decades of serving as a Museum of Atheism. A food queue several dozen strong stands pliantly in the dawn cold in front of a shabby state monopoly store in Moscow. Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Republic spectacularly declare for genuine autonomy, defying the line from Moscow. In Yerevan soldiers enforcing the state of emergency keep themselves warm around a fire next to a snow-shrouded tank.

If I could not read plainly that this piece was published in January 1989, I would guess that it describes 1990 to 1991, after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Everything Sikorski writes about in that passage is taking place not in one of the USSR's restive Eastern European neighbors but within the borders of the USSR itself. He depicts dissolution under way. The rot has already set in: widespread economic inefficiency, nationalist uprisings everywhere, military failure in Afghanistan, the Kremlin's growing inability to finance anti-American subversion, its similar impotence in the face of Solidarity's rebellion, the evaporation of the perestroika illusion, and—not surprisingly—the collapse of elite morale within the party. Around this time, political philosopher John Gray returned from a visit to Poland with a new joke: The Communist party held a competition to recruit new members. If you recruited one new member, you got a vacation on the Black Sea; two, and you could resign from the party yourself; three, and you got a written certificate testifying that you had never been a member. The joke was told to Gray by a member of the Polish Central Committee. Communism was definitely over—it was itself a joke.

But what would replace it—especially in Eastern Europe? Gorbachev seems to have intended to replace the hardliners there with some form of local perestroika. His former college roommate, a Czech, later arrived in Prague to help the velvet revolution move towards the "socialism with a human face" of 1968. But he was shouted down when he slipped unwittingly into leftist jargon. 1968 represented a socialist simulacrum of freedom. By 1989 Eastern Europeans wanted something better and more real. The tectonic plates of politics were shifting. An earthquake was simply a matter of time. The earthquake, when it came, was a picnic. And it marked the return to European history of the Hapsburgs.

On Aug. 19, 1989, a "pan-European picnic" was held near the town of Sopron on the Austria–Hungary border by Hungary's four opposition parties, under the joint patronage of Otto von Hapsburg and the Hungarian reform Communist Imre Poszgay. Hungary had already started to demolish its fortified border with Austria. East Germans now took the opportunity to flee in large numbers. By September the Hungarian government gave up all pretense of guarding the border, despite protests from East Germany's dinosaur leader, Erich Honecker. The Iron Curtain was trampled down by an exodus of refugees from all the Eastern-bloc countries except East Germany. And in November that final domino fell when, in an entirely fitting epilogue to Communism, the Berlin Wall fell too—because the bureaucrats in charge of it couldn't make sense of their orders.

All these revolutions were "velvet" (i.e., non-violent), except for the revolution in Romania, which was a fraudulent pantomime camouflaging a struggle for power between hardline and perestroika Communists, and thus very bloody indeed. With Eastern Europe now independent and heading for democracy, Gorbachev told Thatcher that his willingness to appease stopped at the Soviet borders. In fact, Communism continued to unravel, ending in the farce of the failed counter-coup.

By 1989 Eastern Europeans wanted something better and more real. The tectonic plates of politics were shifting. An earthquake was simply a matter of time.

Gorbachev deserves credit for not sending in the tanks, but it was not entirely a question of moral restraint. In Yugoslavia, the Communists did fight—disguised as nationalists launching wars against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, etc.—to hold on to power; but they failed. There was simply no longer any fight in Communism. It was exhausted—and it left behind a series of exhausted nations and bankrupt economies. What would happen next?

BEFORE examining what did happen, it may be useful to look at what failed to happen. Western observers in 1989 and 1990 feared that Eastern Europe and Russia would develop along the lines that actually characterized Yugoslavia: There would be border disputes, attacks on minorities, anti-Semitism, even fascism and civil wars. Some of these, such as anti-Semitism, did crop up—but, disconcertingly, in Western Europe and on the left rather than in Eastern Europe and on the right. Between 1989 and 2000, Eastern and Central Europe escaped most of the ills forecast for them and introduced democracy and market economics with a good deal of social pain but with relatively little upheaval. Most are now established market democracies, some facing real difficulties in the world recession, but none looking likely to abandon the political and market reforms they embraced in the Nineties.

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How is this success to be explained? The first explanation is that NATO, under U.S. leadership, promised them entry into the alliance if they reformed themselves. This was a powerful incentive. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, et al. wanted U.S. protection against Russia, to be sure, but they also wanted to be "normal" countries inside "Europe." "Europe"—meaning in this context both the European Union and the Western European members of NATO—was less keen. It was nervous about angering Russia by moving NATO to its borders, and it wanted to concentrate on "deepening" the EU with stronger political integration rather than "widening" (and perhaps weakening) it with new members.

It was the U.S., under presidents of both parties, that pushed the unwilling Europeans into NATO expansion. The prospect of NATO membership persuaded the Eastern Europeans to modernize their economies and reform their political systems along liberal lines. That success gave the Europeans the justification for expanding the EU eastwards as well. By the early 21st century, Eastern and Central Europe, including the Baltic states, were full members of both "Europe" and "the West."

A second explanation is that the free-market reforms worked. All the countries that adopted them have prospered after early setbacks—and in general, the more thoroughgoing the reforms (Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia), the stronger the economic revival. Some countries are suffering in the current recession; some over-borrowed (Latvia, Hungary) and are facing a painful financial readjustment; and there has been a modest intellectual reaction against "neo-liberalism" or "market fundamentalism" in the region (encouraged by local boy George Soros). But no politician with realistic hopes of office proposes to reverse the market reforms. They know from bitter experience the truth of the devastating retort by Columbia University's Jagdish Bhagwati to his colleague Joseph Stiglitz:

> Stiglitz made a much-cited claim that the current crisis was for capitalism (and markets) the equivalent of the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Now, we know that all analogies are imperfect, but this one is particularly dicey. When the Berlin Wall collapsed, we saw the bankruptcy of both authoritarian politics and an economics of extensive, almost universal, ownership of the means of production and central planning. We saw a wasteland. When Wall Street and Main Street were shaken by crisis, however, we witnessed merely a pause in prosperity, not a devastation of it.

The experience of Central Europe in particular underscores this truth, since in Poland there has not even been a pause in prosperity. It is the only EU country not to have experienced recession.

A third explanation is that those on both sides of the 1989 barricades showed restraint before, during, and after the velvet revolutions. Beforehand the Communist authorities in Hungary and Poland sought a compromise peace with their dissident opponents in the hope (subsequently realized) that they would be able to participate and even regain power in any new democracy. Afterwards the new democrats sought, with a few exceptions, to preserve this "social peace" by not pursuing justice (let alone revenge) against the people and parties who had misgoverned them for half a century. Few indictments have been brought even against police torturers; fewer have succeeded; and attempts to restore property to its owners or restrict the political offices open to former officials have been kept to a bare minimum by the courts. Some ill consequences have flowed from this restraint—see below—but it did at least ensure that the new democratic order was very quickly accepted by entire societies. There were no outlaws nursing resentment and plotting return.

Finally, a different kind of restraint—the restrained diplomacy of the Bush administration and its major allies—helped to bring about the dissolution of the Soviet empire, the absorption of a united Germany into NATO, and the creation of a free Europe right up to (and into) the borders of the USSR, all without inviting massive bloodshed. In part this was because the peoples behind the Iron Curtain took their revolutions further and faster than governments and diplomats really thought possible or perhaps even wanted. Gorbachev hoped the revolutions in Eastern Europe would go no further than perestroika or "socialism with a human face." Many Western politicians, notably President Bush in his "Chicken Kiev" speech, similarly wanted the Soviet Union to remain intact. It was a known quantity in international affairs—a force for "stability." Who knew what Ukraine or Georgia would get up to?

This caution failed in the end; the empire struck out; everywhere peoples forced governments to give them the independent democracies they wanted. During the crisis, however, this restraint reassured the Kremlin that the West was not planning to exploit the crisis to obtain a more conventional kind of victory. And that, paradoxically, allowed the Kremlin to be more—well, more liberal in its response to the multiplication of rebellions.

For these and other reasons, 1989 and 1991 produced the most significant and beneficial peaceful political change in history. Not only did those years see the liberation of millions of people who only ten years before had been living under what looked like durable oppression, but their secondary effects included the globalization of markets and a marked rise in living standards for *billions* of Asian workers. With such results it is hard to cavil.

Yet within Europe itself there were failures of policy and imagination that have lingered to disturb the apparently peaceful continent. Some "market" reforms included corrupt privatizations that in effect handed massive economic and financial assets to Communist apparatchiks. They quickly became capitalist oligarchs. Shadowy networks between them, their former intelligence services, and the Russian FSB meant that they retained a sometimes unaccountable power and position under the new democracies. That in turn fostered cynicism among the populace. There is a widespread sense of a moral vacuum at the heart of a democracy sundered from justice—coupled with anger that no one has been made to pay for the horrendous crimes of Communism.

This failure to de-Communize has come back to haunt Europeans in international affairs as well as in domestic ones. When Yeltsin tried to hold a constitutional trial of the Communist party—something that might have exorcised the Communist demons—he was discouraged from conducting such a "witch hunt" by the West. One result is the qualified attempt in Russia today to rehabilitate Stalin. Another result is in Western Europe, where the Left still resists the attempt of the Baltic states to obtain a reckoning for one of the largest mass murders in history. But the most ominous result lies in foreign policy.

Because Soviet crimes were never established beyond doubt in a court of law, as Nazi crimes were condemned at Nuremberg, many Russians have the sense that their nation is an innocent victim of Western deceit and bullying. They sympathize with

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Vladimir Putin's description of the fall of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century." They have accordingly embraced a grievance mentality in foreign affairs. And today Russians are easily tempted to support a foreign policy that, in the words of the Eastern European intellectuals who wrote an open letter to President Obama earlier this year, "challenges our claims to our own historical experiences . . . asserts a privileged position in determining our security choices . . . uses overt and covert means of economic warfare, ranging from energy blockades and politically motivated investments to bribery and media manipulation in order to advance its interests and to challenge the transatlantic orientation of Central and Eastern Europe."

Could it have been different? Let's try a thought experiment: What if the events of 1989 and 1991 had occurred in 1986 and 1988, when Reagan was still president and Thatcher still enjoyed a firm grip on power? Would the outcomes have been significantly different?

We have some idea of what Thatcher might have attempted because, in her 1996 reprise of Churchill's Fulton speech, she outlined a full program of post–Cold War institution-making. It included the admission of Central and Eastern Europe's new democracies into NATO, the abandonment of any separate European "defense identity," and the creation of a transatlantic free-trade area encompassing the former Soviet satellites. It was a thoroughgoing Atlanticist program that would have united Europe economically but—quite explicitly—under American political and diplomatic leadership.

Reagan would probably have agreed. But he would also have seen that such a program needed both European acquiescence and a means of soothing Russia's sense of defeat and humiliation. How? Well, Reagan might have celebrated victory over the Soviet Union in the festive (a.k.a. "triumphalist") way that the Bush administration avoided doing—yet treated Russia as among the nations liberated by the Soviet collapse and Russians as the first victims of Soviet oppression. We can glimpse how Reagan might have attempted this from the imaginative and generous speech he gave to the students during his 1988 visit to Moscow University.

But speeches and public-relations gestures would not have been enough. Reagan would have seen that a grand strategic offer was needed to convince the Russians that he was not seeking their surrender in disguise. Might he then have suggested that Russia join NATO and other institutions of Western cooperation—something that Yeltsin himself floated in the early, heady days of post-Communist euphoria? If such an offer had been made and accepted, the Western Europeans would have been unable to resist the tsunami of popular enthusiasm that would then have followed. Concentrating on "deepening" the EU when Reagan and Yeltsin were shaping a new free world from Vladivostok to Vancouver (and not just over water) would have looked like the pettiest kind of envious irrelevance. A very different and more united Europe and West would then have emerged in the 1990s.

Fanciful? Without any doubt. Counterfactual history is little more than an intellectual game to remind us that actual history was not necessarily inevitable. There were other possibilities—roads not taken. Had this particular road been taken, of course, it might have led to a very different destination from that outlined above. It would certainly have negated some of the benefits that emerged from the actual history of the day. For instance, Timothy Garton Ash in *The New York Review of Books* argues persuasively that it was the Bush administration's diplomatic restraint in 1989 and 1991 (rooted in an underestimation of what would happen) that enabled the Soviet Union to retreat and collapse without massive bloodshed. Events would presumably have taken a different course if a policy shaped by Reagan's more adventurous outlook had been pursued. We shall never know.

What we do know, however, is that the current situation of a Europe increasingly divergent from the U.S. but divided between its own East and West on how to deal with a revanchist Russia is the outcome of the cautious "realism" of Western governments in 1989, 1991, and the years following. Their peoples were braver and more imaginative, and they deserved better. But perhaps that thought is secondary to a permanent truth: However sensibly we act, history will always throw up unpleasant surprises. **NR**

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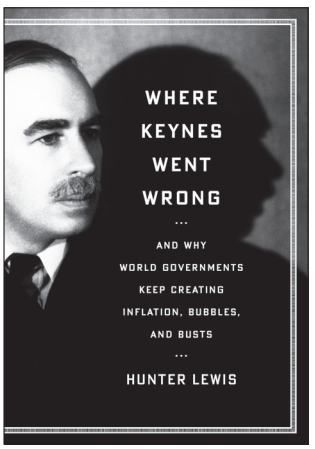

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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

From the Barack Obama archives . . .

NOVEMBER 17, 1967

Dear Miss Darmawan:

I'd like to thank you, Miss Darmawan, for having me in your kindergarten class. It's truly an honor—for both of us, I'm sure. Significant learning has taken place in all aspects of our time together, and as I've said from the beginning, there's room for all of us—all of us, Miss Darmawan—to grow and get better.

I can't tell you, though, how disappointed I am to have received your latest report card. Look, I know some people just aren't going to like me, just aren't going to like what I'm trying to do here in kindergarten. Entrenched powers like yours, Miss Darmawan, are going to push back against progress. I can take it. I'm a big boy. (Sort of.)

But your vicious personal comments—I "have trouble with paste" and "am sometimes restless in class" and "need to develop listening skills" and "struggle with colors"—have led me to an inescapable conclusion: You're not a legitimate teacher in any sense of the word. Your refusal to praise me and your insistence on "grading" my "performance" have created a toxic atmosphere of divisiveness and distrust.

Yours sincerely,
Barry

DECEMBER 26, 1971

Dear Santa Claus:

As of close-of-business, 25 December, I had not yet received the Ready Ranger Fun-Pak Outdoor Adventure toy that I specifically requested in my previous letter.

Let's be clear: It was not a demand. I never "demanded" it—and yet, I can't help but note that other figures in my life, my grandparents especially, executed my wish lists flawlessly. Quite literally every single item I requested was delivered, wrapped as per my instructions, underneath our tree.

Perhaps it's time that I explore other options. The holiday *Eid ul-Fitr*, which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, is a joyful occasion in which children receive, according to custom, many gifts, including those they have *specifically asked for.*

You would do well, sir, to think carefully about the possibility of getting me the Ready Ranger Fun-Pak Outdoor Adventure toy before the beginning of the new year.

Yours in disappointment,
Barry

APRIL 15, 1977

Dear Mr. Eldridge:

This is not an easy letter to write. I'm sure it won't be easy to read. Still, one of my deep personal philosophies is to hit back—hard—when I've been struck. To answer every injustice with a megaphone. Not to just speak truth to power, but to yell it. To holler. To say, "No More!"

I really should have gotten a "C" or higher on that last math test.

Your response, when I confronted you about this in the hall, that I simply "answered more than half of the questions wrong" and "clearly hadn't prepared," would have been fair enough, I suppose, had you not added, gratuitously, "You can't talk your way out of everything, Barry."

I think I'll be forgiven for detecting the whiff of racism in that remark.

Life, Mr. Eldridge, is not like a math test. One doesn't just sit oneself down to a list of problems and begin solving them. That is unrealistic. Let's be clear: I have nothing against math tests—or any other kind of test. And let's be honest: I prepared for the last math test as I prepare for everything—by reminding myself that deep within my core, I already have the knowledge and the skills to tackle anything, to prevail, to succeed, to soar. And by placing the appropriate text underneath my pillow, so as to allow the bits and scraps of knowledge that I don't already possess in my soul to waft upwards during my slumber.

In a nutshell: I was prepared, Mr. Eldridge.

And yet you insist on reverting to the old ways, the old problems. A tank can be filled by pipe A in 3 hours and by pipe B in 5 hours. When the tank is full, it can be drained by pipe C in 4 hours. If the tank is initially empty and all three pipes are open, how many hours will it take to fill up the tank?

Why is the tank empty, Mr. Eldridge? Who emptied it? Why did we inherit an empty tank? Why is one pipe considered faster than the other? And when we rate and rank the pipes, are we not, in a sense, rating and ranking ourselves?

I know the other students just put their heads down and did what they were told. They scribbled and scratched and came up with some "answer" that you found "correct."

Let's be clear. Let's be honest. I'm not asking you to just "give" me a "C" or higher because I demand it, or because I didn't bother to study for the test, or because if you don't I'll call you a racist. I'm asking you to ask yourself what grade you wish I had gotten on that test. What did you hope for, Mr. Eldridge? What did you dream, in your wildest dreams, I'd get on that test?

I'm not ashamed to say that I dreamed about getting an "A+" on that exam. Maybe your dreams aren't so lofty. Maybe you dreamed of giving me a "B" or "B+." That's okay. Maybe we can compromise. Why don't we say, "A-"? Why don't we just do that, declare it an "A-"? Can we do that, Mr. Eldridge? Can we do that? Or are you perhaps too busy preparing for your next Klan rally?

Your call, sir.
Barry

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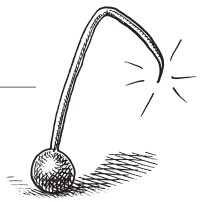

The Bent Pin

BY FLORENCE KING

Just Because Stories

Do not ask from whom freedom of opinion has been stolen. It has been stolen from thee.

I don't mean all opinions; I mean the kind of opinion that just *is*. The opinion that we feel no need to argue about because it is the sum total of our customs, traditions, temperament, personality, general hold on sanity, and presumption of sanity in others. It is the opinion that encompasses the whole crisp panoply of unbudgeable and unabashed certainty that we used to take for granted but which has just about vanished from the American psyche.

This kind of opinion is invariably preceded by expressions such as "even so," "all the same," or my grandmother's signature line, "be that as it may." I call them Just Because opinions, after my own rejoinder whenever matters have reached an impasse and I lose patience. Then I say, "I'm against it." Asked why, I say, "Just because."

Two topics that generate the most Just Because opinions are abortion and gay marriage. I'm against abortion, though I don't really know why. I never needed one, I'm not religious, I detest children, and as a misanthropic elitist I am not overly devoted to the sanctity of life. Maybe I'm against it because I'm a monument of selfishness: Any fetus of mine would have been a little me, and the safety and comfort of a little me would have been of primary importance. The only thing I know for sure is that the controversy is an interloper in my love affair with the English language. Pro-abortion forces have been talking about "back alley" abortions since 1973, and I am still waiting for somebody to define a front alley. Not much here to win Phyllis Schlafly's approval—and a lot to trigger her revulsion—still and all, even so, I am against abortion . . . just because.

Being against gay marriage is easier to argue but possibly more dangerous nowadays. They probably have a legitimate case in view of the fact that the Constitution has been in the process of becoming Mr. Nice Guy's hankie for some time now. It already has "penumbra" sprouting all over it—little mushrooms resembling umbrellas to catch any anti-abortion arguments before they stick. Will gay marriage harm hetero marriage? Did the Feminine Mystique harm it? You bet. Gays are now obsessing about getting married the way women did in the '50s, but when women finally realized that love 'n' marriage is like a horse 'n' carriage with manure at the shovel-ready, they fell headfirst into a steaming pile of Women's Lib and dragged the whole country into domestic turmoil. A society suffers when too many people in it discover that the magic is gone, so what upheaval will disillusioned gays bring us?

Gay marriage cropped up regularly in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons of the '40s and '50s, like the one in which a macho eagle forces Tom to sit on the nest and hatch the eggs, or the one about the nearsighted woodpecker who drills him with a kiss, or the one about—well, watch Cartoon Network and see why I am against gay marriage just because I think it's silly.

It was only to be expected that liberal progressives would regard the Just Because opinion as the mark of a conservative. Brevity and curtness are automatically suspect nowadays, prima facie evidence of ignorance, inarticulateness, stubborness, and prejudice, i.e., conservatism. LibProgs believe that all problems and differences can be solved by having "dialogues," so anyone who holds Just Because opinions must therefore lack "debating skills." LibProgs are big on skills. As Americans get more and more inept, the LibProgs chatter compulsively about skills as if to ward off the pandemic incompetence their policies have created, so if they succeed in putting out a bowdlerized version of *Gone with the Wind*, we can expect to read: "Miss Scarlett, I don't have no baby-birthin' skills!"

LibProgs have their own version of Just Because opinions. Their catch-all dismissal is calling somebody's views "unacceptable." Next they bite off their catch-all verdict: The speaker is "out of touch." They also have concocted a truly marvelous imitation of a courageous community warrior mounting a last stand. They call it "zero tolerance," a phrase that fairly reeks of the obstinacy of the weak. It usually involves a principal or school superintendent who expels a child for bringing a nail file to school or packing a plastic knife in his lunchbox. The building is emptied, the school goes into lockdown, backpacks are searched, the police arrive, it makes "Breaking News," the parents sue, and everybody gets interviewed in a multitudinous sea of cable dialoguing, including the luckless community warrior, who declares that it is time to "move on"—LibProg for caving.

The best LibProg moments occur when zero tolerance inadvertently crosses swords with one of the big tolerance issues, such as gay rights. This has happened twice recently: A boy was suspended for wearing makeup and a girl was refused permission to pose for her yearbook photo in a tuxedo. Some dress codes are more equal than others, and these invaded the sanctuary, giving rise to the Left's ultimate Just Because conundrum: Was the dress code violated? No, indeed, said the kids. Because? "This is just who I am."

No day goes by that I don't just-because something into oblivion, but I have miles to go before I can top my grandmother. One day in the '50s when her hero, Joe McCarthy, was exposing Communist subversives, I came home from school and announced that we were studying the subjunctive in French class. Granny went into high dudgeon, like the time she got chlorine mixed up with fluorine and forbade me to go swimming, and accused the French teacher of indoctrination. I showed her my French book and we finally got her calmed down, but she furled her colors reluctantly.

"Be that as it may, we don't need any subjunctives around here."

It was my father's all-time favorite mother-in-law story. NR

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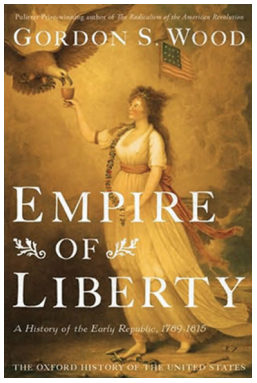
A Rising And Not a Setting Sun

RICHARD BROOKHISER



Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815, by Gordon S. Wood (Oxford, 778 pp., $35)

THE history of America's founding has been well taught in elite American universities for 50 years. That is thanks to a great cohort of scholars—Douglass Adair, Edmund Morgan, Bernard Bailyn, Forrest McDonald—of whom Gordon Wood is one of the last. Despite their differences in emphasis and point of view, these historians agreed in throwing off the Charles Beard paradigm of history: Money made them do it. They noticed that leaders and ordinary Americans in the founding generation had ideas, and they proposed to take those ideas seriously. As a result, early American history withstood the storms of fashion and theory that devastated so many high-end humanities departments, while historians like Wood nourished the popular founders' revival that has been with us for about 15 years.

Empire of Liberty is Wood's contribution to the multivolume Oxford History of the United States. Wood covers the quarter century from the maiden voyage of the new federal government to the end of the War of 1812—from theory to populism, from George Washington to Old Hickory. There are two mainstream interpretations of this period. Everyone likes Washington, and most credit his Treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton, with important bookkeeping. But in the administration of John Adams (1797–1801) the ruling Federalist party lost its way. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and modern followers like Sean Wilentz see the Republican party of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison saving the country from Federalist crimes and excesses, and paving the way for Jacksonian Democracy, the New Deal, and the Great Society. Henry Adams, John's great-grandson, argued, with unmatchable style and bile, that all leaders after 1801, including Jefferson and Madison, were morons and bunglers, but the people and the forces of History thrust the United States into greatness. Wood combines these two views.

America had no victory lap after the Revolutionary War. Debt and misgovernment made the mid-1780s an anxious time. Wood quotes the English radical Richard Price, warning that if "the fairest experiment ever tried in human affairs" miscarried, "a REVOLUTION which had revived the hopes of good men . . . will become a discouragement to all future efforts in favor of liberty." The new federal system designed by the Constitution was meant to resolve and avert conflicts between the states and to curb their oppressive and arbitrary ways. But what sort of system would it erect instead?

Wood calls the government from 1789 to 1801 the "monarchical republic." George Washington fought a monarch and his ministers for eight and a half years; his childlessness made dynastic temptation impossible, and he scorned to be president for life, retiring after two terms. Yet his grave demeanor was the closest thing to royalty America had; anxious to cement a national governing class, he and Martha arranged 16 marriages of younger friends and associates, including Madison's with Dolley Payne. Hamilton, his right-hand man, solved America's debt crisis by establishing a national bank, and hoped to nurture a standing army to defend the nation against enemies foreign and domestic.

They were resisted by their sometime revolutionary colleagues Jefferson and Madison, who came to fear that they were steering—Washington unwittingly, Hamilton with eyes wide open—toward statism, corruption, and literal monarchy. To save America from this fate, Jefferson and Madison founded the Republican party (ancestor of today's Democrats, not the GOP). Jefferson, eight years older, was the senior partner of their decades-long relationship. But, as Wood explains, their dynamics were complex. "Perhaps it was the very innocence and impracticality of many of Jefferson's opinions . . . that attracted the more sober-minded and skeptical Madison. Jefferson's vision of a world free from corruption and war, free from the accumulated debts and regulations of the past . . . was an inspiring antidote to the prudential, mundane, and humdrum world of congressional politics that Madison often had to contend with." Wood also highlights their followers—"middling men" like Matthew Lyon, who arrived from Ireland as an indentured servant, then became a rich entrepreneur in Vermont. Lyon thought the political class should be open to new men like himself, and resented Federalist pretensions and slights. When Lyon, elected to Congress at last, was mocked by a Federalist colleague, he spat in his tormentor's face. The Federalist caned him, and the two rumbled on the House floor. Inspired and organized by Jefferson and Madison, politicians like Lyon rallied urban artisans and small farmers.

Early American politics was envenomed by the French Revolution and its attendant world wars. In the late 1790s the Federalists went off the rails, jacking up taxes to fight France and passing the Alien and Sedition Acts to muzzle dissent. Wood notes that 57 newspapers and magazines were edited by Irish and British immigrants; one of them was Matthew Lyon, who was jailed under the Sedition Act. When the Republicans swept to power after the election of 1800, they committed mistakes of their own. Jefferson pursued a peace policy, fighting European bullies with commercial retaliation. In 1807 he chose to fight his own people by forbidding all foreign trade. Enforcing Jefferson's embargo required measures as draconian as anything the

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May 13 (Thu)	Lisbon	Tour of Old Town Lisbon and Jerónimos Monastery
May 14 (Fri)	Lisbon	Tour of Cascais & Sintra
May 15 (Sat)	Lisbon	Depart for Amadouro Coimbra City Tour (en route) Afternoon seminar, evening cocktail reception
May 16 (Sun)	Regua Pinhão	Morning seminar. Palacio de Mateus tour Gourmet dinner at Vintage House Hotel Late-night cigar smoker
May 17 (Mon)	Pinhão	Morning and afternoon seminars Afternoon Port wine lecture & tasting
May 18 (Tue)	Salamanca	City tour (all day) Late-night cigar smoker
May 19 (Wed)	Vega de Terron	Castelo Rodrigo tour. Afternoon seminar Evening cocktail reception Late-night Portuguese troupe performance
May 20 (Thu)	Lamego Bitetos	City tour. Afternoon seminar Dinner at Alpendurada Monastery Late-night smoker
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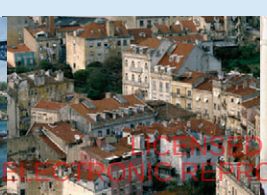

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Federalists had imposed. Five years later, Madison, his successor in the White House, went to war with Britain, even though Congress had abolished the national bank and the army had only 6,700 men. A flurry of disasters followed until victories on Lake Erie and Lake Champlain, and at New Orleans, turned the British back. The people stood by the Republicans even so.

Wood is most interesting when he describes the mores of republicanism. Americans chafed at hierarchy in every area of life. "I'd have you know, *man*," one female domestic lectured her employer, "that I am no *sarvant*; none but *negers* are *sarvants*." Americans gobbled their food and drank like fish—five gallons of hard liquor per person per year. Premarital pregnancy soared to "rates not reached again until the 1960s," Wood writes. American art, never robust—we had a few great political writers and a handful of good painters—languished. "Desiring to make the arts safe for republicanism," writes Wood, Americans left "little room for autonomy and originality." Piety flourished, perhaps partly to clean up after the boozing and fornicating. Americans cherished religious liberty but expected their politicians to respect their faiths. "Had you not better go to church?" one of Aaron Burr's friends suggested (he didn't). A Baptist fan of Jefferson wrote of him as if he did. "*Thomas Jefferson is the angel who poured out his vial upon the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the East be prepared.*" In these years America came to be ruled by what Tocqueville would describe a generation later on: public opinion. The "aggregation of individual sentiments," wrote Tunis Wortman, a New York Republican, produces "the ultimate triumph of Truth."

There was no place for Indians or blacks in republican America (or in the works of its historians—Schlesinger barely mentioned them, Henry Adams discussed only Indians). Wood tells the sad tales. Washington, himself an old Indian-fighter, tried to regulate westward expansion. But it was hopeless. America's population doubled every 20 years, and settlers poured into the frontier, igniting Indian wars from Ohio to Alabama. Back east, states eliminated black suffrage even as they broadened the (white) franchise. Wood shuffles his feet: "Such were the strange and perverse consequences of republican equality and democracy." But perhaps that is exactly what a party of land-hungry middling men led by southern planters was bound to do.

Here and there Wood makes mistakes. He says, as almost everyone does, that farmers beyond the Appalachians distilled their grain into whiskey because that was the only convenient way to ship and sell it. I have seen the barrel of the still that started the Whiskey Rebellion in Washington's second term (an attempt to serve a writ on its owner provoked the first angry confrontation). It is no hillbilly contraption, but an early industrial artifact, with rivets as big as nickels. There was a lot of distilling in them thar hills. But Forrest McDonald studied two decades of Philadelphia newspapers and found no price listings for western whiskey. Wood's drinking statistics suggest that it was consumed locally. Can't historians resolve this rather simple issue?

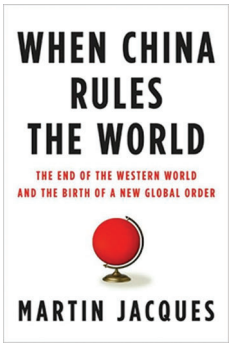
Sometimes Wood's generalizations go off. The triumph of republicanism, he says, meant that "heroic individuals . . . no longer mattered as much as they had in the past." I have often wondered why, after the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, and Sam Houston fell into sudden and lifelong obscurity. Wood's assertion must be the reason.

Wood's prose is workmanlike, which over 700-plus pages could be a lot of work. But well-chosen quotations and lively passages like this description of Washington, D.C., in 1801 lure the reader on: "It was surrounded by woods, its streets were muddy and filled with tree stumps, its landscape was swampy and mosquito-infested, and its unfinished government buildings stood like Roman ruins in a deserted ancient city. . . . Cows grazed on the Mall, and Pierre L'Enfant's splendid squares were used as vegetable gardens." We see from this that Washington has changed materially, though not culturally or intellectually.

Wood has been a professor for 45 years. Joseph Ellis, the very last of his great academic cohort, told me once that when he retires he will not be replaced by a scholar of the founding, but by a specialist "in looms." *Empire of Liberty* can be savored as an envoi. Let us hope it will be followed instead by a rebirth of the sweep and seriousness of its author, and of his peers. **NR**

China Alone?

GORDON G. CHANG



When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order, by Martin Jacques (Penguin, 576 pp., $29.95)

THIS book says we can expect, in the near future, the loss of American preeminence, the fall of the West, and the global dominance of a Chinese civilization-state. China will not just take its place at the top of the international order, it will fundamentally change it. "We stand on the eve of a different kind of world," author Martin Jacques asserts.

And what is the motor of this epochal change? Rapid economic growth that will continue for decades. Following cousins and neighbors, hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants will leave farms, migrate to cities, and become prosperous. This inexorable process could see the industrious Chinese develop the world's largest economy, probably by 2027 (Goldman Sachs's latest prediction). And the recent global downturn, now barely a year old, will hasten the erosion of America's strength and accelerate China's rise.

Has Jacques correctly interpreted the broad sweep of events? No. He is an extrapolationist; and, unfortunately for him, he is assuming the indefinite continuation of trends just when history is making a sharp turn. As a consequence, almost every important prediction in this long book is wrong. We are, as Jacques

Mr. Chang is the author of The Coming Collapse of China.

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writes, standing on the eve of a world that will be different, but it is not the one he foresees.

China, the author forgets, prospered during an extraordinarily benign time, the post–Cold War period of seemingly never–ending globalization and economic expansion. But that era is over. This year, according to the normally sunny World Bank, the global economy will shrink for the first time since World War II, and global trade will decline more than it has in any of the last 80 years. Economies are delinking from one another and, in all probability, will continue to do so for some time.

That's extraordinarily bad news for China, which has an economic model particularly ill-suited to current conditions. The country's economy—now and for the foreseeable future—is dependent on exports, but sales to customers abroad are falling precipitously in this dismal environment. As we saw in the Great Depression, it was the export powerhouses that had the hardest time adjusting to deteriorating economic conditions and, consequently, suffered the most. That is proving to be the case now as well. Jacques notes China's dependence on exports but then shows that he does not comprehend its significance.

Therefore, it is no surprise that he does not understand the barriers to the restructuring of the Chinese economy. He says the economy will remain competitive "for many years" because "the condition on which it rests, the huge migration of rural labor into the cities, is destined to continue for several decades." China's problem, however, is not keeping manufacturing costs low, which is what Jacques is getting at by focusing on the continual enlargement of the labor force. The problem is that foreign customers are no longer buying Chinese goods in the quantities they did in the past. As a result of quickly declining global demand, the pattern of China's migration is reversing for the first time in the history of the People's Republic. Tens of millions of Chinese migrants who used to work in the country's coastal factories have returned to the countryside in the past year. Many, if not most, of them remain out of work today.

Jacques, to his credit, acknowledges the existence of unemployment and other factors, but he then makes the same mistake almost every other China analyst does: He assumes that Beijing will succeed in stimulating domestic consumption to take up the slack. In fact, owing to Beijing's recent policies, consumption's role in the economy has slid from an average of about 60 percent throughout the People's Republic era to around 30 percent today—no country has a lower rate—and almost all of the government's measures to jump-start the economy dampen consumption.

Furthermore, Jacques fails to see that Beijing, because of the demands of China's political system, is renationalizing the Chinese economy and closing the door to foreign investment. Chinese leaders are reversing policies responsible for the growth of the past three decades. The implications of these trends are profound, and Jacques should have examined them. It is simply not good enough to note concerns, dismiss them, and devote just seven pages of text—out of 435—to the sustainability of the country's economic growth, the assumption on which his entire book rests.

This shortcoming is a symptom of a larger problem with the book: It minimizes the flaws inherent in Beijing's one-party state. China's economy has progressed about as far as it can within the country's political system, and the Communist party is limiting the further development of Chinese society. For instance, Jacques writes about the rise of China's universities but never mentions the severe—and worsening—ideological constraints that have held them back. Similarly, he discusses China's cultural power but never mentions the party's strict censorship of movies, books, blogs, and every other form of expression, including karaoke songs.

And then there is demography. At the heart of Jacques's argument is that Beijing's geopolitical dominance will be overwhelming because it governs a state with far more people than the other nations that have sat atop the international system. "China, as the world's leading country, will enjoy a demographic weight that is qualitatively different from that of any previous hegemonic power in the modern era," he writes. Yet Jacques fails to look at demographic trends. Beijing's one-child policy has caused some of the most abnormal gender patterns on the planet and will result in a rapidly shrinking population in about two decades. Sometime around 2030, China's archrival, India, will take over the No. 1 ranking in population.

Fertility rates are never set in stone, but

China's problem is not that it cannot keep manufacturing costs low, but that foreign customers are no longer buying Chinese goods in the quantities they did in the past.

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Chinese ones cannot rise much as long as the Communist party is around. Why? Although virtually every demographer, Chinese and foreign, will tell you the one-child policy is misguided, the party cannot repeal it because to do so would eliminate a crucial element of control over the population, especially in restive rural areas. Moreover, Beijing's leaders, during a time of skyrocketing unemployment, will not dismantle an enormous bureaucracy that reaches into virtually every hamlet in the country. And why does this matter? Because China will get old before it gets rich. No one has figured out how Beijing will care for a rapidly aging population with a quickly shrinking workforce.

Jacques underestimates the dislocations that Communist rule has caused and overestimates the ability of the country's political leaders to remedy them. Worse, he completely misses the significance of striking changes in Chinese society during the three decades of the so-called reform era, which began when Deng Xiaoping grabbed power at the end of 1978.

The reforms Jacques credits to the Communist party were, in fact, started by common folk who circumvented its strict rules. Deng, now credited with beginning the process of transformation, began his tenure as China's paramount leader by adhering to orthodox Communist economics. Peasants and entrepreneurs, however, sparked growth by doing things their own way in defiance of central-government prohibitions on private activity. Deng, in short, succeeded because the Chinese people disobeyed his rules. His genius, if we can call it that, was to have the good sense not to obstruct them when he finally learned what they were doing.

Yet Deng's successors have not been so wise. Today, there's unimaginable social change at unheard-of speed thanks in large part to economic growth and social engineering, yet at the same time China's rulers are standing in the way of meaningful political change. They have become more repressive just as the Chinese people are demanding political liberalization. Read *When China Rules the World*, and you will see none of this crucial history.

And you will see almost nothing about how the forces of modernization almost always overwhelm intransigent political institutions, whether we examine 18th-century France or 20th-century Taiwan. Jacques's failure to examine this issue is a major problem. If asked, he would probably answer that China is unique and that the Chinese people stand behind their leaders because they believe in the unity of the country.

He portrays the Chinese people as supporting Beijing's brand of authoritarianism. But while they may be nationalistic, they are also defiant. Given the turbulence in Chinese society—there are perhaps as many as 90,000 major protests a year—we have to wonder what a radical change in form of government would mean for China's place in the world. Many fondly hope that transformation in Chinese society will be gradual and peaceful; if it is, China will have a chance of eventually dominating the international system as Jacques predicts. Yet the scenario of evolutionary adaptation, which he argues is the most probable, appears inconsistent with the last 2,000 years of Chinese history—and unlikely in the current hardline system. It is much more probable that the clashes between the Chinese people and their government—the demonstrations appear to have been larger, more frequent, and more violent in recent years—will eventually result in a complete failure of the one-party state.

Perhaps China can avoid revolutionary turmoil, but Jacques does not say much on this topic beyond declaring that "the rule of the Communist party is no longer in doubt." He never explains how a country that has trouble governing itself at this moment—and that has a history of radical change—will soon be able to dominate the rest of the world. **NR**

MY STARS

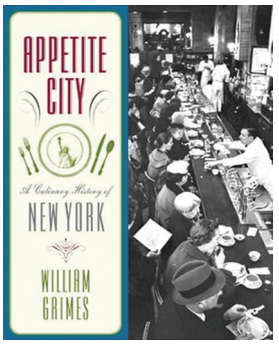
On the day I was born,
The unalterable stars altered.
If I decided to sell lamps,
It wouldn't get dark till the day I died.

Some stars. Whatever I do,
I'm a failure before I begin.
If I suddenly decided to sell shrouds,
People would suddenly stop dying.

—ROBERT MEZEY
after Abraham ibn Ezra

Time Travel In a Melting Pot

JULIE GUNLOCK



Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York, by William Grimes (North Point, 384 pp., $30)

If H. G. Wells had decided to send his Time Traveler to report on the early restaurants of New York, I doubt he could have provided us a much better description of the city's rich culinary history than the one William Grimes has just written. Grimes, a longtime food writer for the *New York Times*—perhaps the most prominent journalistic organ when it comes to food, a maker and breaker of chefs and restaurateurs—has specialized in observing New York's contemporary food scene. Now he looks back, tracing its bewildering maze of food cultures and traditions, from its early markets and oyster bars to today's molecular-gastronomy-influenced restaurants.

Grimes's anthropological study of New York's early food scene begins with a chapter aptly titled "The City Without a Restaurant." To modern New Yorkers, it is inconceivable that their city once "offered scant hope for the hungry." But Grimes expertly shows the reader—with the help of early-19th-century newspaper stories and quotes from journal-keeping tourists, business travelers, and food-loving residents—that the New York of

Julie Gunlock, a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum, is a food writer based in the Washington, D.C., area.

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200 years ago had little more to offer than a patchwork of oyster bars, taverns, chophouses, and lunchrooms selling mainly English fare of meat and bread. Despite the romantic visions we may have of New York's age of innocence, the city actually took decades to develop a basic hospitality industry, and those arriving from Europe had difficulty finding civilized accommodations.

Grimes makes the early, difficult decades of life in New York come to life with his descriptions of two very distinct worlds—the grand yet intensely sheltered world of the privileged Knickerbocker families eating lavish meals in their private homes, and the recently arrived immigrants who relied on the overcrowded (and rather unappetizing, in Grimes's description) open-air markets and on "plain-fare establishments serving crowds of customers at lightning speed and rock-bottom prices."

Less picturesque, but just as important, is Grimes's account of the habits of the majority of New Yorkers who fit somewhere in between these two extremes. He richly describes the popularity of the early and more relaxed oyster houses and English chophouses, the ice-cream saloons serving a female clientele, and the lobster palaces with their naughty dancers (the food was an afterthought); the emergence of German beer gardens and Jewish delicatessens with the influx of German and Jewish immigrants; and the rooftop gardens designed to beat New York's oppressive heat.

The book also explores some of New York's legendary early restaurants: the Hoffman House, Sherry's, the Pompeian-garden-themed Murray's, and the short-lived but fantastical Taylor's—a 7,500-square-foot "temple of sweetness and light" with a "thirty-two-page menu running to 500 items," and dedicated to serving women ice cream and confection.

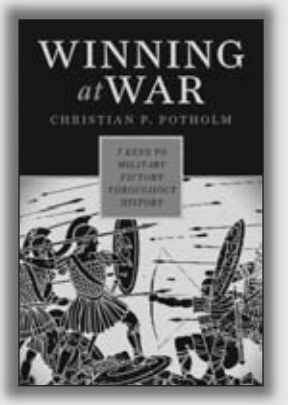
Grimes spends a considerable amount of time on the best of all New York restaurants. Delmonico's, opened in 1827 by two Swiss brothers, became the premier New York restaurant and held that distinction for decades, until Prohibition finally forced it to shut its doors in 1923. The opening of Delmonico's marked a "before and after" point for New York dining. Grimes defines the restaurant's impact bluntly: "Delmonico's brought a whiff of Paris to the crude, bustling streets of a city long on ambition but short on amenities."

That whiff of Parisian luxury soon caught on with New York's elite. Grimes's examination of some of the surviving menus from the gold-fevered 1890s illustrates the mind-boggling number and assortment of dishes offered—every kind of meat and salad and confection, using every conceivable preparation method. Grimes uses one British traveler's diary entry to illustrate the bounty offered at many of New York's higher-end restaurants: The traveler was offered "two soups, two kinds of fish, ten boiled dishes, nine roasted dishes, six relishes, 17 entrees, three cold dishes, five varieties of game, 13 varieties of vegetables, seven kinds of pastry, and seven fruits, with ice cream and coffee."

The private events were even more opulent. One memorable event held at Delmonico's, the Swan Dinner, was "the first in a series of tastelessly extravagant events that would enrich the city's restaurants and appall the public": "Seventy-five guests sat at an oval table nearly as large as the dining room. The center of the table was a thirty-foot lake surrounded by an artificial landscape featuring waterfalls, streams, and grassy hillocks planted with elaborate floral beds. As the guests ate, white swans—on loan from Prospect Park in Brooklyn—paddled across the lake."

But not everyone got away with it. One press-fueled outrage involved a sort of Bernie Madoff–meets–*Top Chef* scandal. In the Versailles-themed Bradley Martin Ball of 1897, an eager, ambitious socialite planned to give New York's high society the grandest party ever seen. However, reports Grimes, the ball quickly became "a moral text," with loud complaints from a judgmental press: "At a time when crusading journalists like Jacob Riis were exposing New York's lower depths, and when immigrants toiled endless hours in the city's sweatshops, the Bradley Martin Ball struck a nerve. It dramatized, in one let-them-eat-cake moment, the gulf between Ward McAllister's top tier [a list of New York's wealthiest families] and the heaving masses far below."

Grimes spends a good deal of time on the culinary habits of those heaving masses, and also on the increasing popularity of "ethnic" dining—which he believes may be New York's greatest achievement as a "food city":



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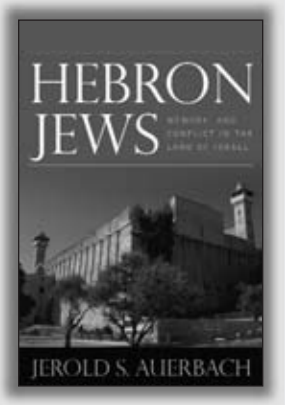

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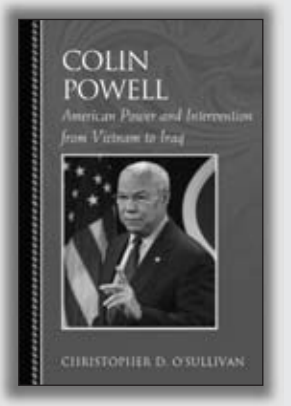

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New York's hallmark as a dining city is not the excellence of its best restaurants. Paris has better French restaurants, Madrid has better Spanish restaurants, and Tokyo has better Japanese restaurants. No city, however, offers as many national cooking styles, at all price ranges, as New York does. This diversity became evident in the mid-19th century, and has only increased with each passing decade. Today, New Yorkers in search of "ethnic" food have in mind a meal that is exotic, informal, and cheap. This is exactly what their 19th-century counterparts were looking for, too.

Grimes lets no national event go unmentioned. The Civil War, Prohibition, the Depression, and even the emergence of the automobile and the entry of women into the workforce—each had an impact on New York's restaurant industry. The book also offers interesting nuggets about modern restaurant traditions, including tipping one's server, which was a "sore point for decades" before becoming the norm. Grimes explains: "Everyone dreaded the cold stare of a menial offended by an insufficient tip, or—the reproof churlish—a too-small coin returned with a look of withering scorn."

No doubt some food mavens will read this book and feel slighted at the omission of a particular neighborhood or type of food. Perhaps some will feel not enough attention was given to the hot-dog stand, or the Russian neighborhood of Brighton Beach . . . and what about Polish food? The list of omissions is large. But Grimes had a lot to cover in this book and he touches on an amazing breadth of subjects—beautifully, thoroughly, and with a depth of research.

What does the future hold for food in New York? Grimes views New York as "a present-tense city" whose diners have "an informed, passionate interest in the new." But he also knows New Yorkers are proud of their past. This makes for a rather schizophrenic food culture that Grimes neatly sums up with an amusing observation: "It spoke volumes about New York that just around the corner from Katz's delicatessen [one of the city's oldest sandwich shops] you could get venison medallions glazed in bee pollen."

Join the author on his time-traveling journey through New York's rise as an appetite city, and you will be richer for the experience. **NR**

Reconsiderations

Be Careful What You Ask For

TERRY TEACHOUT

Is there an American novelist who has fallen farther from grace than John P. Marquand? For years he was one of the best-known names on the bestseller lists, and his part-time job as a judge for the Book-of-the-Month Club made him as influential as he was successful. But Marquand wasn't a hit with the highbrows. Edmund Wilson, writing in *The New Yorker* in 1942, went so far as to declare that "Mr. Marquand hasn't the literary vocation." Marquand was stung by such sniping, and despite his Pulitzer Prize and *Time* cover, he went to his grave sure that he'd gotten the shaft because he was popular. True or not, it was Wilson who had the last word. Only two of Marquand's melancholy, satire-flecked novels of middle- and upper-middle-class life, *The Late George Apley* (1937) and *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* (1941), are still in print, and despite the efforts of a handful of stalwart critical admirers, he is now all but forgotten.

The latter-day eclipse of Marquand's reputation is explicable, if not quite understandable. He was a Trollope-like chronicler of New England manners who lacked Trollope's charm, and his smoothly flowing prose was more workmanlike than stylish. Solid competence, not arresting individuality, was his literary line. Yet several of his books had the root of the matter in them, and one in particular strikes me as little short of masterly. *Point of No Return*, published in 1949, is the story of an ambitious boy from a small town in Massachusetts who makes his way to Manhattan, there to become the vice president of a small private bank—and to find that the promotion he has sought since returning from the war is mysteriously unfulfilling.

If any of this sounds suspiciously familiar, it's because Marquand was one of the first novelists to explore the lingering disquiet felt by a generation of American businessmen whose lives were upended by World War II. Charles Gray, the protagonist of *Point of No Return*, was the original man in the gray flannel suit, unable to see why the world he left behind was no longer capable of satisfying him. But *Point of No Return* is not the novelistic equivalent of *The Best Years of Our Lives*. It is, rather, something more complicated and searching: a study of success and its discontents.

America's major novelists have had surprisingly little to say about the world of work, save to dismiss it from a distance as soul-shriveling drudgery. *Point of No Return*, by contrast, opens with a detailed and wholly believable description of a day in the life of Charles Gray, who takes the 8:30 train to Manhattan each morning, there to labor in the vineyards of the Stuyvesant Bank, where he clips the coupons of *rentiers* and polishes such apples as come his way. At night he returns home to his wife, children, and country club, balances the checkbook, and dreams of the promotion that will make it possible for him to send his son to Exeter. Then he awakes one rainy morning and finds himself thinking instead of Clyde, the Massachusetts village that he left behind in 1930 to seek his fortune. All at once Charles gazes into his bathroom mirror and sees that the values by which he lives are "contrived." His friends are Babbitts, his daily chores meaningless, his ambitions hollow. He wants something more—but what?

With the practiced skill of a Hollywood director, Marquand turns the clock back a quarter century. We learn that Charles is the oldest son of a New England family headed by a flighty, unsound man who frittered away a small fortune and thereafter was viewed with suspicion by his ultra-proper friends and neighbors. When Charles falls in love with the daughter of one of Clyde's oldest families, he discovers that his father's irresponsibility has cast a cloud over his own reputation and that he is not deemed an acceptable suitor. Cruelly hurt by his inability to vault the high walls of caste, he puts Clyde behind him, goes to New York, and seeks a less provincial life. For a time he thinks he has found it, but then he looks into the mirror

Mr. Teachout, drama critic of the Wall Street Journal *and the chief culture critic of* Commentary, *is the author of* Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong, *out in December from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.*

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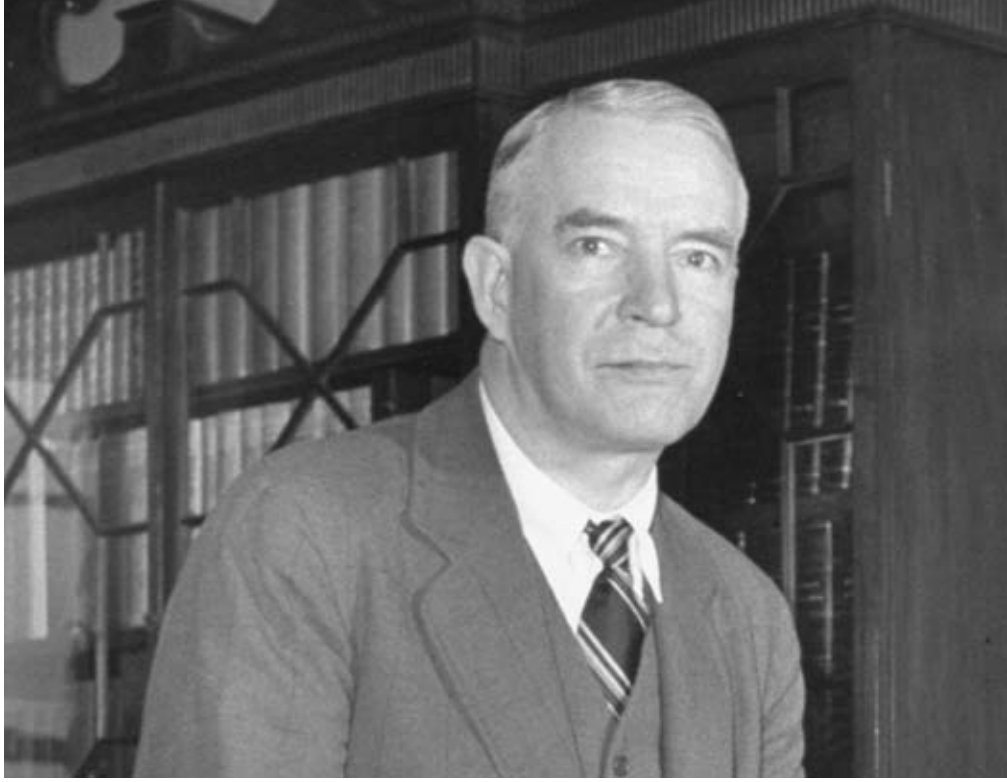
and realizes that he has spent the whole of his life measuring himself by the yardstick of a town that time has left behind. Not even the promotion he has sought for so long can erase the chilling suspicion that his worldly success is a handful of dust:

> There was a weight on Charles again, the same old weight, and it was heavier after that brief moment of freedom. In spite of all those years, in spite of all his striving, it was remarkable how little pleasure he took in final fulfillment. He was a vice-president of the Stuyvesant Bank. It was what he had dreamed of long ago and yet it was not the true texture of early dreams. . . . They would sell the house at Sycamore Park and get a larger place. They would resign from the Oak Knoll Club. And then there was the sailboat. It had its compensations but it was not what he had dreamed.



John P. Marquand in 1943

What keeps *Point of No Return* from descending into romance-novel bathos is the cool detachment with which Marquand describes Charles Gray's failed quest for fulfillment. Though he is sensitive, intelligent, and deeply dissatisfied, none of these things propels him out of the tightly circumscribed orbit of his businessman's life. Instead of having a torrid affair with his secretary or quitting the Stuyvesant Bank to become a beachcomber, he stays loyal to his wife and children, and we never doubt that he will continue to remain so, or that his steadfastness is anything other than admirable, perhaps even wise. What he has is all there is.

Most people who read for pleasure sooner or later find themselves in the pages of a novel. When I first read *Point of No Return*, I was struck by the precision with which it conveys what it feels like to partake of an experience that was and is central to American life. Anyone who, like me, has traveled the long road that leads from a small-town childhood to a big-city career will immediately appreciate the way in which Marquand sketches Charles's transformation into a polished banker. To be sure, *Point of No Return* is no Horatio Alger tale—Charles Gray is too riddled with self-doubt for that—but neither is its author cynical about the circuitous voyage that is his subject. *The Great Gatsby* tells a similar story more artfully, but also with a heightening touch of melodramatic lyricism that is necessarily less true to life. Not so the plainer-spoken Marquand. Writing in 1949, he suggested with uncanny exactitude much of what I felt when I came to New York as a young man some three decades later.

I especially like the scene in which Charles arrives at Grand Central Terminal in 1930, having put his troubled past behind him to come looking for a job:

> Outside the station, the streetcars and the traffic were already running in a steady stream under the ramp at Pershing Square. The shops on Forty-Second Street, the drugstores, the optical stores and haberdasheries, were already opening for the day. . . . As he walked up the Avenue the city seemed to him as impersonal as it always did later and he loved that impersonality. Now that he had left his bag at the parcel room there was nothing to tie him. The tides of the city moved past him and he was part of the tide. His own problems and his own personality merged with it.

In *The Message in the Bottle*, Walker Percy compared Charles's "exurbanite alienation" to the sweaty desperation of Franz Kafka's antiheroes. Though he also spoke of Marquand's "Book-of-the-Month Club disenchantment" as being restricted by "the genteel limits of irony," he praised Gray as "the suburban counterpart of Joseph K. (and in my opinion, a not unworthy counterpart: the first hundred pages of *Point of No Return* are of a very high order)." I used to think that was coming it a bit high. Now I know better. *Point of No Return* is not a great novel, nor was its author a great novelist, but I've yet to read a book that did a better job of putting a man like Charles Gray on paper.

Therein lies the power and the significance of *Point of No Return*: It portrays middle-class life with a sympathetic honesty that is both unromantic and uncommon. When Charles admits to himself that his destiny is "to face no danger or uncalculated risk . . . to measure his merriment and hedge on his tragedies," he is telling most of us something about ourselves as well—something that we don't really want to hear, even though we wouldn't have it any other way. **NR**

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Film

Dark and Wild

ROSS DOUTHAT

ADAPTING a beloved children's book for the screen is a difficult task. Adapting a beloved *picture* book, famous as much for its vivid illustrations as for its spartan plot, is considerably more challenging. Doing it while answering to an increasingly skeptical studio, whose moneymen are convinced that you're squandering their investment on an expensive art film that's too childish for adults and too bizarre for children—well, that's a real test of a director's mettle.

WARNER BROS.

It's a test that Spike Jonze has passed. His version of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, five difficult years in the making, is gorgeous, haunting, and completely unlike any children's story you've ever seen committed to the screen. Yes, it's also messy, weird, and occasionally tedious. But considering what it could have been—either an overindulged auteur's spectacular misfire, or a panicked studio's compromised botch—it's a miracle that the finished product is this good.

In Sendak's slender story, a rambunctious boy named Max is sent to bed without his supper, dreams his way into a world of gallumphing monsters who acclaim him as their king—and then, homesick, dreams his way back out again.

In Jonze's thicker, darker film, Max is a child of divorce, and his rampages are at once a cry for attention—from his older sister and her crowd of friends, and from his weary mother—and an inchoate protest against a home life that's gone badly out of joint.

One of these protests ends with him racing out of the house into the night, where a suburban subdivision abruptly gives way to a dark wood and a ragged coastline. There, a small sailboat stands ready for his journey across a storm-tossed ocean to the forested, flame-lit island of the Wild Things, where Max finds a society of monsters that's as disrupted and unhappy as the one he's fled.

Most of the initial disruption comes from Carol (the rumbling voice of James Gandolfini), who's tearing down the Wild Things' strange houses—they're like enclosed bird's nests, or hollow balls of yarn—in a fury over the apparent defection of his red-haired crush, KW (Lauren Ambrose), to a different gang of friends. But there's plenty of unhappiness to go around. The whole tribe—which includes the eagle-headed Douglas (Chris Cooper), the chattery, resentful Judith (Catherine O'Hara) and her ponderous husband Ira (Forest Whitaker), the goatish Alexander (Paul Dano), and a silent, nameless minotaur—seems to be in mourning for some lost Arcadia, a paradise in which (as Carol puts it) "only the things you want to happen would happen."

They're ripe for a messiah, in other words, and so they crown Max their king, after he claims extraordinary powers and promises to "keep out all the sadness." His reign is a child's idea of paradise, all wild rumpuses, ambitious fort-building, earth-clod fights, and furry group hugs and slumber parties. But paradise is fragile, and slowly but surely, the sadness leaks back in—first in hurt feelings and petty resentments, and then in the kind of wild anger that prompted Max to run away in the first place.

The whole narrative is basically a dream sequence, one that's as psychologically ambitious, in its way, as any of the Freudscapes that Gandolfini famously wandered through on *The Sopranos*. As with a true dream, no single interpretation fits exactly, but multiple readings resonate. The Wild Things are at once aspects of Max's personality brought to shambling, self-pitying, horn-crowned life, a child's-eye reimagining of his fissiparous domestic sphere, and a recapitulation, on a monstrous scale, of the social dynamics of a kindergarten.

When this works, it really works. The monsters themselves are an astounding technical achievement, part CGI and part gloriously tactile puppetry, with faces more expressive than those of many flesh-and-blood actors. Their island—really the coastline of Australia—has the barren, sadness-haunted beauty that you'd expect to find just east of Eden. And Max Records, the child cast as Max, holds the screen like a seasoned movie star, projecting exactly the right mix of yearning, woundedness, and unexpected joy.

But it's hard to sustain a trip through the unconscious for the length of an entire film, and I found myself growing frustrated, in stretches, by the movie's plotlessness and lack of narrative momentum. The monsters' feuding and pouting can feel annoying as well as captivating, like a perpetual recess crossed with a Park Slope group-therapy session. And although their initial, night-shrouded appearance is suitably terrifying, the Wild Things could stand to be somewhat scarier. Even their famous threat ("We'll eat you up, we love you so!") is drained of the menace that Sendak's book imparts to it, and without that hint of mortal danger, Max's sojourn on the island—and with it, the movie—limps rather than rushes to a close.

But these may be adult complaints; any child with a healthy sense of wonder, I suspect, would have no trouble giving himself over unreservedly to the movie's dream logic and ignoring its lapses and longueurs. "I didn't set out to make a children's movie," Jonze has said. "I set out to make a movie about childhood." But what he's done blurs those categories: This is a film about childhood that can be appreciated by pretentious, nit-picky grown-ups, but my bet is that it will find its fiercest fans among the Maxes of the world. **NR**

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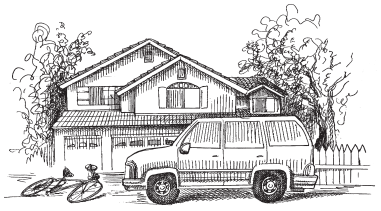
The Straggler

Driveway Drama



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

So many things to know; so many points of view; so many disagreements, so many mishaps. Compared with home ownership, politics is a breeze.

We are waiting for the driveway people to show up—the firm, I mean, that seals the surface of the driveway with a black rubberizing liquid. This is a 40-yard driveway, running alongside the house, street to detached garage out back. We've been waiting several days for the work crew. The job is weather-dependent, and the weather's been erratic. The firm is juggling schedules and weather forecasts—we understand. The crew actually did show up one day, but the sky was overcast and threatening. "We'll do it, boss, if you tell us to; but the rain's gonna splash it up on that nice white siding of yours . . ."

That remark about siding cut close to the bone. The first time our driveway needed sealing I did the job myself. It didn't seem there could be much of a skill factor. You get some five-gallon drums of sealant from Home Depot and a couple of disposable stiff-bristle spreading brushes, don your most expendable pairs of jeans and sneakers, and slosh the stuff on. Driveway sealant, however, belongs to that category of substances that get everywhere, and into everything, like the paraffin in *Three Men in a Boat*. Somehow I splashed the stuff on my house's pristine white siding. It's still there, 16 years later—under several coats of white paint; but vinyl siding is not hospitable to paint, and you can see those black splashes when the light's right, and I know they're there.

We looked at the sky. I looked at my siding. We sent the crew away. Not, however, before neighbors had seen the truck. Neighbors had also seen me assiduously blowing and sweeping the driveway in preparation for the several appointments that hadn't happened, so it was common knowledge in the street that the Stragglers were having their driveway done. People were free with opinions.

Neighbor A pooh-poohed the whole idea of an asphalt driveway. "More trouble than it's worth. Dirt, that's all you need. Dirt, and a layer of gravel. Go check out the big houses up in [our town's high-professional district]. They all have gravel. They're rich and smart, and they have gravel." This is useful information, but not timely. Our driveway's not in bad shape. In another ten years, when it's breaking up, we may have it dug up and graveled. (Although . . . how do you shovel snow off a gravel driveway?)

Neighbor B was okay with asphalt, but thought sealing ours was a waste of time. "How long you been here now? Seventeen years? And this is the original driveway, right? It's nearing the end of its natural life. Look, it's getting uneven, lotta cracks. Let it break up. Five years, get a new one." Five years? No, this is a counsel of despair.

Neighbor C was fine with asphalt and sealant both, but said we should fill the driveway's numerous cracks before the sealing crew shows up again, assuming they ever do. "That stuff they use isn't thick enough, it won't seal those cracks you got. Get some crack filler from Home Depot. Do it before they seal, then the filler won't stand out so much, it'll be sealed over."

Off to Home Depot for a couple of large plastic bottles of crack filler. It's evil stuff from Satan's workshop, black and viscous, close kin to the sealant itself, and with the same knack of escaping from its assigned place in the cosmic scheme of things. In no time at all, it did just that. I had filled a crack running across the driveway next to the house. Then I worked with my leaf blower to clear dust and leaves from an adjacent stretch. A stray blast from the blower hit the filled crack. The evil black filler leapt up in a spray, mottling two strakes of my white siding! Half an hour's frantic work with rags and paint thinner followed, but those strakes will never again be white.

As I was working down near the street end of the driveway, Neighbor D strolled by. Neighbor D works in construction. There is nothing he does not know about building materials and tools. He stood watching me filling cracks. His silence was eloquent. If I had been doing something right and necessary, he would have passed by with a cheery word of encouragement. Aware of him standing there silently smoking a cigarette, I knew my crack-filling fell short in some way.

"Talk to me, Ed. What am I doing wrong?"

"You can't just lay it down in a bead like that. Gotta *force* it into the cracks."

"Won't gravity do it? Gravity's always been my friend up to now."

"Nah. You'll get air bubbles. And you gotta flatten down the bead, or it'll set proud and the sealer guys won't get good spread."

There is no gainsaying Ed. On matters of construction he is infallible, whether or not speaking *ex cathedra*. He found precisely the right trowel from his vast basement trove, and I worked my way back up the driveway, troweling the filthy stuff into cracks and smearing it down level. I was nearing the garage end when Mrs. Straggler pulled in from the street. She had been visiting, and for some reason had taken the family dog with her. The next chapter of the story unfolds like a movie calamity scene, like Michael Corleone just failing to stop his wife from blowing herself up.

Car pulls into driveway. Mrs. Straggler turns off ignition, opens car door. I realize what's about to happen, and wave arms frantically from up at the garage end. "No! Stop! Nooo . . ." Too late. The dog has jumped out, and is scampering about on the driveway, crisscrossed as it now is with patches of sticky black smeared-out crack filler. I grab the dumb mutt and pick him up. Crack filler transfers itself from pooch paws to Dad's shirt, pants, face, hands, watch.

How to get driveway crack filler off dog paws? I flirt with the idea of looking this up on one of those Internet ask-any-question sites, but consult omniscient Ed instead. "White spirit? No, it'll hurt the pads. Use sand." We rub pooch paws with sand.

When the kids have left home, we'll rent a nice little apartment somewhere. **NR**

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Happy Warrior

BY MARK STEYN

Neatherworld

"Would it not be easier," wrote Bertolt Brecht after the East German uprising in 1953, "for the government to dissolve the people and elect another?"

The thought has occurred to several governments over the years, and I don't mean the dictatorships. Andrew Neather, a former speechwriter for Tony Blair, wrote a piece for the *London Evening Standard* the other day and, considering he's one of those quintessentially slippery New Labour spinmeisters, it was disarmingly insouciant in its straightforwardness.

When Labour came to power in 1997, the number of work permits issued each year quadrupled and immigration exploded. Mr. Neather revealed that there was "a driving political purpose" behind this: "Mass immigration was the way that the UK Government was going to make the UK truly multicultural." From Labour's point of view, it would have the additional benefit of helping put the Conservatives out of sync with the times: As Mr. Neather writes, "The policy was intended—even if this wasn't its main purpose—to rub the Right's nose in diversity and render their arguments out of date." If the justification for U.S. immigration is that we need foreigners to do "the jobs that Americans won't do," in the United Kingdom they need them to do the jobs that no one in his right mind would hire a working-class Brit for: The imported workers would be engaged in fields that "certainly wouldn't be taken by unemployed BNP voters from Barking or Burnley," sneers Mr. Neather. "Fascist au pair, anyone?"

The BNP is the British National party, and yes, it is, broadly, fascist. But it barely existed until New Labour's plan to "make the UK truly multicultural" got under way, and it certainly never had such a purchase on England's white working class that the one major European power that never succumbed to 'tween-wars fascism this year elected two BNP members to the European parliament.

That's the problem with dissolving the people and electing another: You'd have to be a genius to pull off such a transformation without any unintended consequences. If Blair's game was to import cool new Labour voters and make the dead white males of the Tory party look even more squaresville, he also wound up imposing huge and potentially fatal stresses on Britain's fraying societal structure.

Take the recent observations of Anjem Choudary, Principal Lecturer of the London School of Shariah. "There is a spark that has ignited and its flame has become unstoppable," he declared. "We find ourselves in the year 2009, waiting for Rome to fall, waiting for the White House to fall and indeed waiting for Buckingham Palace to fall." Mr. Choudary is a subject of the Crown but does not think of himself as such. His organization has demanded that the Queen convert to Islam, wear a burqa, and "give up playing God." His website, Islam4UK, has many detailed illustrations of British landmarks after the introduction of sharia:

Buckingham Palace would be renamed "Buckingham Masjid" (or mosque) and have a dome fitted on top with speakers to call the faithful to prayer. It would be used as an Islamic court to issue punishments under sharia, and also as a detention center for "prisoners of war."

As it happens, Anjem Choudary is not an immigrant: He is British born and bred. But he is a testament to the "true multiculturalism" that New Labour prized so highly. For all but a few guilt-ridden middle-class liberals, "multiculturalism" is a nullity and those within its vapid bounds will seek their identity elsewhere. In a Britain with high Muslim immigration, high Muslim birth rates, and high Muslim conversion rates, that means the host community winds up assimilating with the newcomers.

The town of Sutton, in Surrey, has just introduced female-only swimming sessions in the municipal pool for Muslim women. They'll put blinds on the windows so no infidel men can see in, and the male lifeguards will be reassigned to other shifts. Might fall afoul of church-state separation in the U.S., but hey, what's the big deal?

And why stop there? Azad Ali, the new adviser to the Crown Prosecution Service (the equivalent, more or less, of the U.S. attorneys), is a supporter of Abdullah Azzam—a key influence on Osama bin Laden—and a man who quotes approvingly such observations as "If I saw an American or British man wearing a soldier's uniform inside Iraq I would kill him because that is my obligation." Mr. Ali's appointment is part of the curious British strategy of "defusing" Islamic radicals by putting them all on the government payroll.

Even if one takes the view that arresting fellows for treason is awfully vulgar and a touch heavy-handed, it's hard to see quite what benefit such chaps are to the United Kingdom. You can't even say they contribute to "diversity" since such views are becoming distressingly ubiquitous.

At a certain level, the idea of the muezzin issuing his call from Buckingham Palace is risible. But, after the fall of Constantinople, it happened to what was then the largest Christian cathedral in the world. Is it really so fanciful to imagine the same thing happening in a country undergoing artificially induced, unprecedented demographic transformation?

The transparent ambition of an Anjem Choudary is less deluded than the blithe arrogance of an Andrew Neather. Combine them and toss in the likes of the British National party, and you have the certainty of profound social convulsions in the years ahead. There'll always be an England? Ninety years ago, Bernard Shaw set his play *Heartbreak House* on the eve of the Great War among a British ruling class too smug and self-absorbed to see what was coming. "Do you think," he wrote, "the laws of God will be suspended in favour of England because you were born in it?" NR

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Lucky fisherman "catches" $100,000,000 treasure lost for 210 years under the sea

A close-up view of America's First Silver Dollar recovered in the Gulf of Mexico by a commercial fisherman. These long-lost coins were part of the cargo of a Spanish warship that set sail for New Orleans in 1784. Experts value the treasure in excess of $100,000,000.

Vast shipwreck treasure sees light of day. It was sunrise on an August morning when a fisherman and his crew cast their nets from his trawling vessel some 50 miles south of Louisiana in the Gulf of Mexico. While trolling the depths, the net suddenly got caught and the captain could only dread the lost time and money that the damage would bring. As the tattered net emerged from the ocean depths, he spied what appeared to be clumps of rocks weighing it down.

As the net hovered slowly over the deck, the contents poured out followed by excited cries of "Coins! Coins!" The captain quickly realized they had snagged a fisherman's dream: sunken treasure! And not just any treasure, but early American silver dollars that had gone down 210 years earlier.

In 1784, at the end of the American Revolutionary War, a heavily armed ship was bound for the port of New Orleans. On board was a fortune in Spanish Silver Dollars. These dollars were well known by Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin and other founding fathers of our nation. Hundreds of thousands of them were loaded for the trip to New Orleans, yet not a single one arrived.

With no survivors from the ill-fated voyage, historians can only guess at what happened. Some say powerful storms took her down while others speculate it was treasure-hungry pirates. Whatever happened, the secret – along with a treasure valued near $100,000,000 in today's dollars – was sent to a watery grave some 300 feet below the ocean's surface.

America's first silver dollar. The favorite coin of colonial Americans, they were called "Spanish Milled Dollars". Widely used and accepted as payment in the thirteen colonies, the United States government accorded them status of official legal tender.

If the story of George Washington throwing a silver dollar across the Potomac River is indeed true, then doubtless it was a silver dollar like this one that made the trip.

Unfortunately, even though they were struck in large quantities, not many Spanish Milled Dollars survive today. They were widely used in the United States through the Civil War. Then, the government withdrew them from circulation and they were melted down.

History-Making coins at a bargain price. Due to the historic discovery of this treasure, GovMint.com is releasing America's first silver dollars to the public for an amazingly low price. It's a legendary silver dollar that belongs in every collection. For a limited time, these authentic silver dollars minted during the American Revolutionary War are priced at $49 plus shipping and handling — a dramatic reduction from the market price of this coin anywhere else worldwide.

Each coin has been individually hand-selected for quality from this spectacular find, is accompanied by a signed Certificate of Authenticity and protected in a full color display holder. Supplies of America's first silver dollar from this historical treasure ship are limited so be sure to reserve your coin today.

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Request special offer code RLE164-02.

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Some say powerful storms took down the Spanish ship in 1784, others speculate it was blood-thirsty pirates. Whatever really happened remains a mystery.

The Origin of the Dollar Sign

Ever wonder where our "$" sign originated? Numismatic experts believe that the American colonists abbreviated transactions in Spanish milled dollars by drawing a pillar wrapped with a scroll. Look carefully at the reverse of America's first silver dollar and you will notice a pillar on each side of the crowned coat of arms. The pillar is wrapped with a scroll, approximating the symbol we use today for our national currency. Indeed, early Americans also called these coins "pillar dollars."

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Consumer Protection Begins with Uniformity

Consumer financial protection begins with tough, uniform lending laws that protect all borrowers equally, no matter where they live. Whether purchasing a home across the street, or across state lines, home buyers should be able to count on consistent regulations to help them through the process.

Today's confusing web of state regulations helps bad actors prey on vulnerable borrowers.

And with a uniform national standard, borrowers across the country will benefit from more affordable loans as lenders pass on the savings they realize from no longer having to grapple with today's onerous patchwork of state and local laws.

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